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William Morris
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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
HIS DAUGHTER MAY MORRIS

VOLUME VII
THE STORY OF GRETTIR THE STRONG
THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS
AND NIBLUNGS

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William Morris, from a photograph made in 1876 frontispiece
Map of the West of Iceland between pages xlviij, 1

INTRODUCTION

IT was in 1868, in the fall of the year, that my father began to turn his attention to the study of Icelandic language and literature. Consciously or unconsciously he was preparing for the time when "The Earthly Paradise" would be out of his hands. Something weighty had to be found to take its place; in a simple, inevitable way "something turns up" to fill his mind and supply the loss: at last he comes into touch with the life of the North which hitherto he had had to interpret for himself from somewhat languid or old-fashioned recensions. It was a wonderful moment—a poet's entering into possession of a new world, only partly his till now.

In five or six months he was publishing some of the results of these studies: "Gunnlaug Wormtongue" appeared in the January "Fortnightly Review" of the following year; the "Story of Grettir the Strong" was printed in April, and "The Lovers of Gudrun" was written for "The Earthly Paradise" in June.

Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon gives the following account of his first meeting with my father, brought about, it is interesting to note, by Warrington Taylor:

"I spent an evening at Mr. Taylor's, who had much to tell about your father. He was very enthusiastic about his personality and character, and besought me to allow him to mention my name to Morris, for he felt sure he would like to make the acquaintance of a real Icelander. He felt certain that the Saga-literature of Iceland would greatly interest him. A day or two afterwards I had a note from Taylor to say that Morris would be glad to see me on (I forget what) day in the afternoon, I think at four o'clock. I made my appearance at the appointed hour at 26 Queen Square. I met your father in the hall. With a manly shake of the hand he said: 'I'm glad to see you; come upstairs!' And with a bound he was upstairs and I after him until his study on the second floor was reached. A very animated conversation ensued on Icelandic matters, especially literature. With the Sagas of Burnt

Nial and of Gisli the Outlaw he was familiar from Sir George Dasent's translations; the former of these he admired immensely and regarded it as one of the greatest productions of medieval literature. His talk about the artistic handling of the characters of Nial's Saga was as striking as it seemed, and still seems to me, true. He thought the characters were moulded so powerfully, both in respect of dæmonic depth and lofty magnanimity, as in the cases of Hallgerd and Hrapp on one side, and Gunnar and Nial on the other respectively, because the mind of the author was already preoccupied with the grand types of the heroes (Sigurd and Volsung) and heroines (Brynhild, Gudrun) of the Elder Edda. This work he was already familiar with from Benjamin Thorpe's translation, on the poetical diction of which he made many good-humoured criticisms, e.g., on Hundingcide for Hunding's slayer, etc. He knew Cottle's translation (1796) of the mythic songs of the Edda. He was quite familiar with Mallet's 'Northern Antiquities' and Walter Scott's 'Abstract' on Eyrbyggja-saga. From modern books of travel on Iceland he was surprisingly well up in the geography of the island, and from Bishop Finn Jonsson's 'Historia ecclesiastica Islandiæ' he had mastered the main features of the general history of the country.

"He proposed to read Icelandic with me three times a week. He asked me what Saga he should begin with, and I recommended the story of 'Gunnlaug the Wormtongue.' And our first meeting came to an end."

The lessons arranged for at this meeting were well established by October, when my father writes to Cormell Price about "a friend of mine called Magnússon, an Icelander, with whom I am doing some translations and who is teaching me the tongue."

Mr. Magnússon sends me the following account of their method of work, with some observations on my father's style in these translations.

"The first saga I read with Morris was the short tale of 'Gunnlaug the Wormtongue.' It was finished in a fort-

night, and then we set to work on 'The Story of Grettir the Strong.' Owing both to other literary occupations and to pressure of business engagements Morris decided from the beginning to leave alone the irksome task of taking regular grammatical exercises. 'You be my grammar as we go along,' was the rule laid down by himself from the beginning and acted upon throughout. With the endless calls upon his time it was practically impossible for him to give himself leisure for acquiring by heart the by no means easy accidence of the language, and, as for syntax, it did not exist, written in any language accessible to him. I therefore did my best to bring home to him, as we went on translating, the etymology, the grammar, and the peculiarities of the syntax. Our method of work was this: We went together over the day's task as carefully as the eager-mindedness of the pupil to acquire the story would allow. I afterwards wrote out at home a literal translation of it and handed it to him at our next lesson. With this before him Morris wrote down at his leisure his own version in his own style, which ultimately did service as printer's copy when the Saga was published. His style is a subject on which there exists a considerable diversity of opinion. In either direction people have gone to extremes.

"Morris was, as everybody knows, a devoted lover of Chaucer, and otherwise widely read in Middle English literature. This reading early gave his poetical diction a certain old-time flavour. But this was the marked difference that, while Middle English literature is markedly coloured by the use of Romance words, Morris's poetry and his narrative prose are as markedly Teutonic. He often used to say that the Teutonic was the poetical element in English, while the Romance element was that of law, practice and business.

"From the beginning Morris was strongly impressed by the simple dignity of style of the Icelandic saga. There must be living many of his friends who heard him frequently denounce it as something intolerable to have read an Icelandic saga rendered into the dominant literary dialect of the day—the English newspaper language. I had myself many a con-

versation with him on the matter. In one of our early sittings I had occasion to review the growth of the oral tradition of the saga, illustrated by the story of the Icelander whose memory was so well stocked with sagas that he entertained King Harold Hardrada and his court all through one autumn up to Yule, never rehearsing the same saga twice.[1] It was clear that the saga-man's art of setting forth in tale the deeds of the men of old was patronized by aristocratic audiences no less than by plebeian. Hence, William Morris used to say, we know the secret of the Homeric dignity of the saga style: the tale is told of the aristocrats of the sword to their aristocratic descendants. This dignity of style cannot be reached by the Romance element in English. If it is to be reached at all—and then only approximately—it must be by means of the Teutonic element in our speech—the nearest akin to the Icelandic. Here I am perfectly certain that I give Morris's statement of his standpoint correctly. Only when approached from this point of view can a fair and sober estimate of Morris's saga style be obtained. It is not 'pseudo-Middle-English,' as some critics have thought. It is his own, the result of an endeavour by a scholar and a man of genius to bring about such harmony between the Teutonic element in English and the language of the Icelandic saga as the not very abundant means at his command would allow. The soundness of this principle is surely not in dispute, only the application of it. Custom found fault with its being carried so far as to create words such as 'by-men' (byjarmenn) = town's folk, 'shoe-swain' (skósveinn) = a page, 'out-bidding' (útboð) = a levy of armed men; custom objected to 'obsolete' terms, such as 'stead' for homestead, 'cheaping' for port or trading station, etc.; it objected to the diction generally as strange and unfamiliar. It is too early as yet to foretell what effect Morris's narrative style will have upon future writers. His neologisms are confined practically to particular expressions in the sagas and are very limited in number; for any serious student of the originals they cannot fail to be of interest as a bold-minded scholar's attempt to enrich his own language

[1] Morkinskinna, pp. 71, 72.

with terms drawn from its original elements. That Morris's style generally has affected written English will hardly be denied."

Among the noteworthy things my father said about Grettis-saga is the remark called forth by the sight of Grettir's lair on Fairwood-fell (Journal, Vol. VIII); the strangeness and violence of the place stirred his imagination to one of the sudden moments of insight which came upon him so often in the Iceland journeys. "Such a savage and dreadful place," he says, "that it gave quite a new turn in my mind to the whole story, and transfigured Grettir into an awful and monstrous being like one of the early giants of the world."

The Journals that my father kept of his travels in Iceland frequently give expression in frank and simple language to the excitement, the emotion with which he visited such places —the emotion which bestows the gift of vision and sends the pilgrim wandering away back through time with a poignant greeting to the luckless hero outlawed from his fellows: another greeting—for already, while translating the saga, he had greeted him "through the dark" in two sonnets, one of which appeared in the first pages of the volume. I give here the other, numbered (2) on the manuscript of them.

Grettir, didst thou live utterly for nought?
Among the many millions of the earth
Few knew thy name nor where thou hadst thy birth.
And yet, that passing glow of fame unsought,
That eager life in ill luck's meshes caught
That struggles yet to gain a little mirth
Amidst of pain—with less remembered worth
Great things to little things have great men brought.

At least thy life moved men so, that e'en I,
Thy mother's wail in the lone eve and drear,
Thy brother's laugh at death for thee, can hear—
Hear now nor wonder at her agony
Nor wonder that he found it good to die—
Speak, Grettir, through the dark: I am anear.

In one of my father's letters from Ems he speaks of "Magnússon's Saga [which] is rather of the monstrous order;" this was the Völsunga Saga which Mr. Magnússon had translated in the course of the summer of 1869 and sent out to Ems. As Mr. Magnússon observes, he now read the "monstrous" tale of Sigmund, Signy and Sinfjotli for the first time.

"When he returned from his trip we soon met and had a talk about the Saga. He was not so impressed with it as I had expected he would be; but added that as yet he had had time to look only at the first part of it. I explained to him how the Völsunga Saga was based on the heroic cycle of the Elder Edda, with the original text of which as yet he was unacquainted. I resumed lessons with him on the old system—three days a week—this time taking the story of the men of Salmonriverdale (Laxdaela). Some time afterwards—I forget how long—when I came for the appointed lesson, I found him in a state of great excitement, pacing his study. He told me he had now finished reading my translation of the 'grandest tale that ever was told.' He would at once set about copying it out, and procure the original for himself, which he promptly did. On my suggesting that it would be desirable for him to go through the originals of the Edda songs on which the story was based, he set aside for a while the Laxdaela Saga and we got to work on the heroic songs of the Edda. They were studied as the Gunnlaug story and Grettir had been, but in this case my translation had to be even more exactly literal. These songs were finished about midwinter 1870."

The following translations from the Edda were made at the same time—the spirited and amusing Thryms-kvida (Lay of Thrym) and the tragic Vegtams-kvida (Baldur's Dream or Baldur's Doom, as it is sometimes called). It may be remembered that Gray translated the latter under the title of "The Descent of Odin" (Works, ed. Gosse, 1, p. 61).

BALDUR'S DREAM

1

THE Gods on a time
At the Thing were all gathered
And the Goddesses there
Were gathered together,
And this thing the great Gods
Had to talk over there,
Why baleful dreams
Had come to Baldur.

2

Up rose Odin,
Lord of the ages,
And he on Sleipnir
Laid the saddle,
And thence he rode down
To the deeps of Niflhel,
Till he met the hound
That came out of Hel.

3

All bloody was he
On his breast's forefront,
Long while he bayed
On the Father of wisdom,
But forward rode Odin
Mid the din of the field-way
Till he came to the high-built
House of Hell.[1]

4

Then rode Odin
To the door looking eastward
Where he wotted the mound was
Wherein lay the Vala.

[1] The distinction between 'Hel' and the 'House of Hell' in vv. 2 and 3 is intentional. Hel, in v. 2, is *helli* in the Icelandic, translated 'cave' in Corp. Poet. Bor.; the House of Hell is *Heljarrann*. Ed.

Then to the witch-wife
Wise words he sang,
Witch-work for dead folk,
Till unwilling she rose
With dead words in her mouth:

5

"What man is that
A man that I know not
Who has brought unto me
The burden his mind bears?
I was snowed on with snow
And swept over with rain
And dripped down on with dew,
Dead, dead for a long while."

6

"Way-wearer they call me,
The son of the death-wise;
Tell me tidings of Hel
And of earth will I tell thee.
For whom are these benches
Strewn with red rings
And the goodly bed
With gold done over?"

7

"For Baldur standeth
The mead brewed ready
And this shimmering drink
That the shield lieth over.
From the sons of the Gods
Is all hope gone away.
To speech was I driven
And now will hold silence."

8

"Hold not silence, O witch-wife
Thee yet will I question
Until all wisdom
Well I wot.

Who shall be
The bane of Baldur
And snatch the life
From Odin's son?"

9

"High beareth Hod
The staff made famous,
He shall be
The bane of Baldur
And snatch the life
From Odin's son."

10

"Hold not silence, O witch-wife,
Thee yet will I question,
Until all wisdom
Well I wot.
Who upon Hod
Will wreak heavy vengeance
Or bring bale
On Baldur's bane?"

11

"Rind beareth Vali
In the Western halls;
One-night-old shall slay folk;[1]
Nor washeth hand
Nor combeth head
Ere bale he bringeth
On Baldur's foeman."

12

"Hold not silence, O witch-wife,
Thee yet will I question
Until all wisdom
Well I wot.

[1] In the halls of the West, Rind shall bear a son, Vali, that shall avenge Odin's son when but one night old. Corp. Poet. Bor. 1, 182. Ed.

Who are the mays
Who shall wait heavy-hearted
And on their heads
Cast heaven's skirts?"

13

"Way-wearer art thou not
E'en as I wotten
But rather Odin
Lord of the ages."
"Thou art no witch-wife
No wise woman,
But of three giants
Art thou the mother."

14

"Ride thou home, Odin,
And be thou all joyous
That thou mayst behold
Menfolk once more,
Till the last day when Loki
Slips loose from his bounds
And that great day
Of the Gods' death is come."

THE LAY OF THRYM

1

WRATH Thor was waxen
Then when he woke up
And waking missed
His mighty hammer.
Bristled his beard thereat,
Broad about tossed his hair
As the great Earth-born
Groped round about him.

2

And this word he spake
Of all words the first word:
"Hearken thou, Loki,

To that when I speak now
For the like none hath heard
In the heaven above
Or the earth—of the God
Whose hammer got stolen."

3

Forth then they went
To the fair house of Freyia
And this word he spake,
Of all words the first word:
"Lend to me, Freyia,
Thy feather-wrought shape
That that hammer of mine
I might get me again."

4

"I would give it to thee
Though of gold it were wrought,
Were it of silver
Yet shouldst thou have it."
Forth then flew Loki,
Whistled the Feather-shape
Until from the garth
Of the Gods he was gotten
And withinwards was come
To the world of the giants.

5

On mound was Thrym sitting,
Mighty lord of the giants,
For his bitches he twisted
The bright gold leashes,
And his mares' manes
Made equal duly.

6

"How fare the Æsir,
How fare the Elf-folk?
Why comest thou hither
To the home of the Giants?"

"Ill fare the Æsir,
Ill fare the Elf-folk;
Hast thou not hidden
The Hot-rider's hammer?"

7

"Yea, I have hidden
The Hot-rider's hammer;
Eight miles it lieth
Under the earth.
No man there is
Who ever may fetch it
But if he shall bring me
Freyia for bride."

8

Forth then flew Loki,
Whistled the Feather-shape,
Until from the world
Of the giants he was gotten
And withinwards was come
To the garth of the Gods.

9

"Speedeth thine errand
After thy labour
Up there aloft?
Tell me long tidings;
Oft from the sitting one
Faileth the story,
Oft from the lying one
Lies bubble forth."

10

"E'en after my labour
So has mine errand been;
Thrym has gotten thine hammer,
High lord of the giants.
No man there is
Who ever may fetch it
But if he shall bring him
Freyia for bride."

11

Forth then they went
Fair Freyia to meet,
And this word he spake,
Of all words the first word:
"Bind on, O Freyia,
The linen of brides;
To the dwelling of giants
We twain shall drive thee."

12

Wroth then waxed Freyia,
Fiercely she snorted,
The abode of the Æsir
All trembled beneath her,
The gem of the Brisings
Was bursten asunder.
"Me methinks deem ye
Mad with love-longing
That I should fare with you
To the world of the giants."

13

The Gods on a time
At the Thing were all gathered,
And the Goddesses there
Were gathered together,
And this thing the great Gods
Had to talk over there:
How they might lay hand
On Hot-rider's hammer.

14

Then spake Heimdall,
Whitest of high Gods,
Wise in what should be
As any God was:
"Bind we on Thor then
Linen that brides bear,
Let him have the great gem
Of the Brisings hung on him.

15

"Let us hand to him
Tinkle of keys
Let women's weed
Fall wide o'er his knee,
Set on his breast
Broad stones and bright,
Tire his head
Trimly and fair."

16

Then spake Thor,
God of the Thunder:
"Craven the Æsir
Should call me certes
If the linen of brides
I should let bind upon me.

17

Then spake Loki,
Son of Laufey:
"Hold thy peace, Thor,
Of such words as these;
Doubtless the giants
Asgard shall dwell [in]
But if thou shalt have
Thine hammer to thee."

18

Bound they on Thor then
Linen that brides bear,
Bound they upon him
The gem of the Brisings,
Hung they unto him
Tinkle of keys,
Let women's weed
Fall wide o'er his knee,
Set on his breast
Broad stones and bright,
Tire his head
Trimly and fair.

19

Then spake Loki
Wise son of Laufey
"I will go with thee,
Thy waiting woman;
We two shall drive
To the dwelling of giants."

20

Then were the he-goats
Straight driven homewards,
Swift in the yoke,
Strong to run well.
Hills brake asunder,
Earth burned aflaming
And Odin's son wended
To the world of the giants.

21

Then loud spake Thrym
Lord of the giants:
"Stand up, ye giant folk
Strew ye the benches,
For now wendeth hither
Freyia to wed me
The daughter of Niord
Noatown's dweller.

22

"Here in my garth
Go the kine gold-horned,
Oxen all black
Bring the giants disport,
Many good things
Many gems have,
Freyia alone
Was all I thought lacking."

23

In the evening betimes
Were they brought thither
And in to the giant folk

Now was the ale brought;
Sif's husband alone
Ate up an ox there
Eight salmon therewith
And all the sweet things
That the women's due were,
And drank out three mead-tuns.

24

Loud spake Thrym
Lord of the giants:
"Who e'er saw brides
Bite any keener?
Ne'er saw I brides
Broader mouthed bite,
Nor more mead than that
Drunk by a maid."

25

There sat the wily
Waiting-maid by him
And found out a word
For the giant's word ready:
"Naught at all Freyia
For eight nights hath eaten,
Such longing had she
For the home of the giants."

26

He stooped 'neath the linen
Sore longing to kiss her,
But backward he leaped
Endlong the hall:
"Why are Freyia's eyes
So fierce unto me?
Methinks from those eyes
Fire flamed forth."

27

There sat the wily
Waiting-maid by him
And found a word

For the giant's word ready:
"Nought at all Freyia
For eight nights hath slept
Such longing had she
For the home of the giants."

28

In slunk the wretch,
The giant's sister,
And dared to bid
For the bride-fee there:
"Give from thy hands
The gold rings ruddy
If thou wouldst win
Goodwill of me
Goodwill of me,
And my loving kindness."

29

Then loud spake Thrym,
Lord of the giants:
"Bear in the hammer
The bride to hallow,
Lay ye Miolnir,
On the knees of the maiden,
And hallow us both
To the hands of Varar."

30

Laughed then Hot-rider's
Heart in the breast of him,
When hardly of heart
His hammer he caught up:
Thrym got he first slain,
Lord of the giants,
Then all the kin
He crushed of the giant folk.

31

Slew he the old crone
The giant's sister,
She who had bidden

Give forth the bride-fee;
Smiting her lot was
Instead of silver,
And the hammer's stroke
For store of gold rings.

So came Odin's son
In the end by his hammer.

When preparing my notes on "The Fostering of Aslaug" I found on enquiry that the lovely story of Heimir and the harp-child is usually included at the end of the Völsunga Saga, but should scarcely have ventured to remark upon its absence in the present translation, if I had not turned up the following observation in an "Academy" notice on the Völsunga Saga by Dr. Vigfusson and Mr. George Simcox (August 13, 1870): "It is hard to see why the translators have omitted the story of Heimir and Aslaug, Brynhild's daughter, which has as much to do with the main story as the tale of Erp and Hamdir, and serves, besides the beautiful legend of the harp-child, to connect the cycles of Sigurd and Ragnar." Before reading this I had already enquired of Mr. Magnússon the reason of the omission. He replied that they had considered it to belong rightly to the Ragnar Lodbrok saga.

"The Fostering of Aslaug" in "The Earthly Paradise," and still more, perhaps, the unpublished romantic tale of Swanhild, the sun-bright daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, seem to have been my father's first reachings-out towards the realization of the Matter of the North before he became fully alive to the splendour of the Sigurd legend. Over a thousand lines of "The Wooing of Swanhild" still exist, written in a seven-line stanza. It is possible that his more intimate knowledge of the originals changed the current of his thoughts and made it difficult for him to complete this tale in the spirit in which it was begun. It was certainly written

before his Northern studies had replaced the earlier background of medieval romance by the simpler and more heroic setting of the Edda fragments. Such lines as

> In tilt and pageant and high feast went by
> The next few days. . . .

could not have been written by my father coming fresh from the "Lay of Hamdir."

One little piece of work my father projected—it may have been only by way of exercise and comparison—was the translation of the Nibelungenlied. He had the courage to render some two hundred and sixteen stanzas of this ponderous work—about a tenth part of it—and then wisely turned to more sympathetic tasks.

Some additional notes and corrections recently made by Mr. Magnússon for the Grettis saga and Volsunga saga appear in the present volume. If the original collaborators had re-published their translations after this lapse of time, they would doubtless have made alterations and corrections of mistaken or doubtful passages in the text; but I have not felt justified in presenting it in an altered form. These translations of the sagas appear here as forming part of my father's works, and as such they must stand, with text unaltered from that of the first edition, in the case of the Grettis saga incorporating the corrections noted on pp. 273–278 of the 1869 edition, but making no pretence of special or recent scholarship. These corrections had already been included in the 1900 reprint. Mr. Magnússon's additional notes, which follow the original notes to each saga, will supply much useful information to those who may be reading the text with a view to comparing it with other translations.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE TO THE STORY OF GRETTIR THE STRONG

First Edition in crown octavo, F. S. Ellis, 1869.
Twenty-five copies on Whatman's handmade paper, in demy octavo.

New Edition in crown octavo, Longmans, Green and Co., 1900.

Golden Type Edition in quarto, Longmans, Green and Co., 1901.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE TO THE VÖLSUNGA SAGA: THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS AND NIBLUNGS

First Edition in crown octavo, F. S. Ellis, in 1870.
Twelve copies on Whatman's handmade paper in demy octavo.

Camelot Series, edited with introduction and notes by H. Halliday Sparling, Walter Scott, 1888.

Golden Type Edition in quarto, Longmans, Green and Co., 1901.

GRETTIS SAGA: THE STORY OF GRETTIR THE STRONG: TRANSLATED FROM THE ICELANDIC BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON & WILLIAM MORRIS

A LIFE scarce worth the living, a poor fame
Scarce worth the winning, in a wretched land,
Where fear and pain go upon either hand,
As toward the end men fare without an aim
Unto the dull grey dark from whence they came:
Let them alone, the unshadowed sheer rocks stand
Over the twilight graves of that poor band,
Who count so little in the great world's game!

Nay, with the dead I deal not; this man lives,
And that which carried him through good and ill,
Stern against fate while his voice echoed still
From rock to rock, now he lies silent, strives
With wasting time, and through its long lapse gives
Another friend to me, life's void to fill.

WILLIAM MORRIS

PREFACE

WE do not feel able to take in hand the wide subject of the Sagas of Iceland within the limits of a Preface; therefore we have only to say that we put forward this volume as the translation of an old story founded on facts, full of dramatic interest, and setting before people's eyes pictures of the life and manners of an interesting race of men near akin to ourselves.

Those to whom the subject is new, we must refer to the translations already made of some other of these works,[1] and to the notes which accompany them: a few notes at the end of this volume may be of use to students of Saga literature.

For the original tale we think little apology is due; that it holds a very high place among the Sagas of Iceland no student of that literature will deny; of these we think it yields only to the story of Njal and his sons, a work in our estimation to be placed beside the few great works of the world. Our Saga is fuller and more complete than the tale of the other great outlaw Gisli; less frightful than the wonderfully characteristic and strange history of Egil, the son of Skallagrim; as personal and dramatic as that of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue, if it lack the rare sentiment of that beautiful story; with more detail and consistency, if with less variety, than the history of Gudrun and her lovers in the Laxdæla; and more a work of art than that, or than the unstrung gems of Eyrbyggja, and the great compilation of Snorri Sturluson, the History of the Kings of Norway.

At any rate, we repeat, whatever place among the best

[1] Such as "Burnt Njal," Edinburgh, 1861, octavo, and "Gisli the Outlaw," Edinburgh, 1866, quarto, by Dasent; the "Saga of Viga-Glum," London, 1866, octavo, by Sir E. Head; the "Heimskringla," London, 1844, octavo, by S. Laing; the "Eddas," Prose by Dasent, Stockholm, 1842; Poetic by A. S. Cottle, Bristol, 1797, and Thorpe, London and Halle, 1866; and the "Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue" by Magnússon and Morris, in the "The Fortnightly Review," January, 1869.

Sagas may be given to Grettla[1] by readers of such things, it must of necessity be held to be one of the best in all ways; nor will those, we hope, of our readers who have not yet turned their attention to the works written in the Icelandic tongue, fail to be moved more or less by the dramatic power and eager interest in human character, shown by our story-teller; we say, we hope, but we are sure that no one of insight will disappoint us in this, when he has once accustomed himself to the unusual, and, if he pleases, barbarous atmosphere of these ancient stories.

As some may like to know what they are going to read about before venturing on beginning the book, we will now give a short outline of our Saga.

The first thirteen chapters (which sometimes are met with separately in the Icelandic as the Saga of Onund Treefoot), we have considered as an introduction to the story, and have accordingly distinguished them from the main body of the book. They relate the doings of Grettir's ancestors in Norway, in the lands West over the Sea and in Iceland, and are interesting and in many points necessary for the understanding of the subsequent story; one of these we note here for the reader's convenience, viz. the consanguinity of Grettir and King Olaf the Saint;[2] for it adds strongly to the signifi-

[1] Such is the conversational title of this Saga; many of the other Sagas have their longer title abbreviated in a like manner: Egil's saga becomes Egla, Njal's saga Njála; Eyrbyggja saga, Laxdæla saga, Vatnsdæla saga, Reykdæla saga, Svarfdæla saga, become Eyrbyggja, Laxdæla, Vatnsdæla, Reykdæla, Svarfdæla (gen. plur. masc. of dælir, dale-dwellers, is forced into a fem. sing. regularly declined, saga being understood); furthermore, Landnáma bók (landnáma, gen. pl. neut.) the book of land settlings, becomes Landnáma (fem. sing. regularly declined, bók being understood); lastly, Sturlunga saga, the Saga of the mighty family of the Sturlungs, becomes Sturlunga in the same manner.

[2]

Onund Treefoot	brother to	Gudbiorg
Thorgrim Greypate		Gudbrand
Asmund the Greyhaired		Asta (mother of)
Grettir the Strong		Olaf the Saint.

cance of the King's refusal to entertain Grettir at his court, or to go further into the case of the murder he was falsely accused of.

The genealogies of this part of the work agree closely with those of the Landnáma-bók, and of the other most reliable Sagas.

After this comes the birth of Grettir, and anecdotes (one at least sufficiently monstrous) of his unruly childhood; then our hero kills his first man by misadventure, and must leave Iceland; wrecked on an isle off Norway, he is taken in there by a lord of that land, and there works the deed that makes him a famous man; the slaying of the villainous bearserks, namely, who would else have made wreck of the honour and goods of Grettir's host in his absence; this great deed, we should say, is prefaced by Grettir's first dealings with the supernatural, which characterise this Saga, and throw a strange light on the more ordinary matters throughout. The slaying of the bearserks is followed by a feud which Grettir has on his hands for the slaying of a braggart who insulted him past bearing, and so great the feud grows that Grettir at last finds himself at enmity with Earl Svein, the ruler of Norway, and, delivered from death by his friends, yet has to leave the land and betake himself to Iceland again. Coming back there, and finding himself a man of great fame, and hungry for more still, he tries to measure himself against the greatest men in the land, but nothing comes of these trials, for he is being reserved for a greater deed than the dealing with mere men; his enemy is Glam the thrall; the revenant of a strange, unearthly man who was himself killed by an evil spirit; Grettir contends with, and slays this monster, whose dying curse on him is the turning-point of the story.

All seems fair for our hero, his last deed has made him the foremost man in Iceland, and news now coming out of Olaf the Saint, his relative, being King of Norway, he goes thither to get honour at his hands; but Glam's curse works; Grettir gains a powerful enemy by slaying an insulting braggart just as he was going on ship-board; and on the voyage it falls out that in striving to save the life of his shipmates by a despe-

rate action, he gets the reputation of having destroyed the sons of a powerful Icelander, Thorir of Garth, with their fellows. This evil report clings to him when he lands in Norway; and all people, including the King from whom he hoped so much, look coldly on him. Now he offers to free himself from the false charge by the ordeal of bearing hot iron; the King assents, and all is ready; but Glam is busy, and some strange appearance in the church where the ordeal is to be, brings all to nothing; and the foreseeing Olaf refuses to take Grettir into his court, because of his ill-luck. So he goes to his brother, Thorstein Dromund, for a while, and then goes back to Iceland. But there, too, his ill-luck had been at work, and when he lands he hears three pieces of bad news at once; his father is dead; his eldest brother, Atli, is slain and unatoned; and he himself has been made an outlaw, by Thorir of Garth, for a deed he has never done.

He avenges his brother, and seeks here and there harbour from his friends, but his foes are too strong for him, or some unlucky turn of fate always pushes him off the help of men, and he has to take to the wilderness with a price upon his head; and now the other part of the curse falls on him heavier, for ever after the struggle with the ghost he sees horrible things in the dark, and cannot bear to be alone, and runs all kinds of risks to avoid it; and so the years of his outlawry pass on. From time to time, driven by need, and rage at his unmerited ill-fortune, he takes to plundering those who cannot hold their own; at other times he lives alone, and supports himself by fishing, and is twice nearly brought to his end by hired assassins the while. Sometimes he dwells with the friendly spirits of the land, and chiefly with Hallmund, his friend, who saves his life in one of the desperate fights he is forced into. But little by little all fall off from him; his friends durst harbour him no more, or are slain. Hallmund comes to a tragic end; Grettir is driven from his lairs one after the other, and makes up his mind to try, as a last resource, to set himself down on the island of Drangey, which rises up sheer from the midst of Skagafirth like a castle; he goes to his

father's house, and bids farewell to his mother, and sets off for Drangey in the company of his youngest brother, Illugi, who will not leave him in this pinch, and a losel called "Noise," a good joker (we are told), but a slothful, untrustworthy poltroon. The three get out to Drangey, and possess themselves of the live-stock on it, and for a while all goes well; the land-owners who held the island in shares, despairing of ridding themselves of the outlaw, give their shares or sell them to one Thorbiorn Angle, a man of good house, but violent, unpopular, and unscrupulous. This man, after trying the obvious ways of persuasion, cajolery, and assassination, for getting the island into his hands, at last, with the help of a certain hag, his foster-mother, has recourse to sorcery. By means of her spells (as the story goes) Grettir wounds himself in the leg in the third year of his sojourn at Drangey, and though the wound speedily closes, in a week or two gangrene supervenes, and Grettir, at last, lies nearly helpless, watched continually by his brother Illugi. The losel, "Noise," now that the brothers can no more stir abroad, will not take the trouble to pull up the ladders that lead from the top of the island down to the beach; and, amidst all this, helped by a magic storm the sorceress has raised, Thorbiorn Angle, with a band of men, surprises the island, unroofs the hut of the brothers, and gains ingress there, and after a short struggle (for Grettir is already a dying man) slays the great outlaw and captures Illugi in spite of a gallant defence; he, too, disdaining to make any terms with the murderers of his brother, is slain, and Angle goes away exulting, after he had mutilated the body of Grettir, with the head on which so great a price had been put, and the sword which the dead man had borne.

But now that the mighty man was dead, and people were relieved of their fear of him, the minds of men turned against him who had overcome him in a way, according to their notions, so base and unworthy, and Angle has no easy time of it; he fails to get the head-money, and is himself brought to trial for sorcery and practising heathen rites, and the

"nithings-deed" of slaying a man already dying, and is banished from the land.

Now comes the part so necessary to the Icelandic tale of a hero, the revenging of his death; Angle goes to Norway, and is thought highly of for his deed by people who did not know the whole tale; but Thorstein Dromund, an elder half-brother of Grettir, is a lord in that land, and Angle, knowing of this, feels uneasy in Norway, and at last goes away to Micklegarth (Constantinople), to take service with the Varangians: Thorstein hears of this and follows him, and both are together at last in Micklegarth, but neither knows the other: at last Angle betrays himself by showing Grettir's sword at a "weapon-show" of the Varangians, and Thorstein slays him then and there with the same weapon. Thorstein alone in a strange land, with none to speak for him, is obliged to submit to the laws of the country, and is thrown into a dungeon to perish of hunger and wretchedness there. From this fate he is delivered by a great lady of the city, called Spes, who afterwards falls in love with him; and the two meet often in spite of the watchful jealousy of the lady's husband, who is at last so completely conquered by a plot of hers (the sagaman here has taken an incident with little or no change from the Romance of Tristram and Iseult), that he is obliged to submit to a divorce and the loss of his wife's dower, and thereafter the lovers go away together to Norway, and live there happily till old age reminds them of their misdeeds, and they then set off together for Rome and pass the rest of their lives in penitence and apart from one another. And so the story ends, summing up the worth of Grettir the Strong by reminding people of his huge strength, his long endurance in outlawry, his gift for dealing with ghosts and evil spirits, the famous vengeance taken for him in Micklegarth; and, lastly, the fortunate life and good end of Thorstein Dromund, his brother and avenger.

Such is the outline of this tale of a man far above his fellows in all matters valued among his times and people, but also far above them all in ill-luck, for that is the

conception that the story-teller has formed of the great outlaw. To us moderns the real interest in these records of a past state of life lies principally in seeing events true in the main treated vividly and dramatically by people who completely understood the manners, life, and, above all, the turn of mind of the actors in them. Amidst many drawbacks, perhaps, to the modern reader, this interest is seldom or ever wanting in the historical sagas, and least of all in our present story; the sagaman never relaxes his grasp of Grettir's character, and he is the same man from beginning to end; thrust this way and that by circumstances, but little altered by them; unlucky in all things, yet made strong to bear all ill-luck; scornful of the world, yet capable of enjoyment, and determined to make the most of it; not deceived by men's specious ways, but disdaining to cry out because he must needs bear with them; scorning men, yet helping them when called on, and desirous of fame: prudent in theory, and wise in foreseeing the inevitable sequence of events, but reckless beyond the recklessness even of that time and people, and finally capable of inspiring in others strong affection and devotion to him in spite of his rugged self-sufficing temper—all these traits which we find in our sagaman's Grettir seem always the most suited to the story of the deeds that surround him, and to our mind most skilfully and dramatically are they suggested to the reader.

As is fitting, the other characters are very much subordinate to the principal figure, but in their way they are no less life-like; the braggart—that inevitable foil to the hero in a saga—was never better represented than in the Gisli of our tale; the thrall Noise, with his carelessness, and thriftless, untrustworthy mirth, is the very pattern of a slave; Snorri the Godi, little though there is of him, fully sustains the prudent and crafty character which follows him in all the Sagas; Thorbiorn Oxmain is a good specimen of the overbearing and sour chief, as is Atli, on the other hand, of the kindly and high-minded, if prudent, rich man; and no one, in short, plays his part like a puppet, but acts as one expects

him to act, always allowing the peculiar atmosphere of these tales; and to crown all, as the story comes to its end, the high-souled and poetically conceived Illugi throws a tenderness on the dreadful story of the end of the hero, contrasted as it is with that of the gloomy, superstitious Angle.

Something of a blot, from some points of view, the story of Spes and Thorstein Dromund (of which more anon) must be considered; yet whoever added it to the tale did so with some skill considering its incongruous and superfluous nature, for he takes care that Grettir shall not be forgotten amidst all the plots and success of the lovers; and, whether it be accidental or not, there is to our minds something touching in the contrast between the rude life and tragic end of the hero, and the long, drawn out, worldly good hap and quiet hopes for another life which fall to the lot of his happier brother.

As to the authorship of our story, it has no doubt gone through the stages which mark the growth of the Sagas in general, that is, it was for long handed about from mouth to mouth until it took a definite shape in men's minds; and after it had held that position for a certain time, and had received all the necessary polish for an enjoyable saga, was committed to writing as it flowed ready made from the tongue of the people. Its style, in common with that of all the sagas, shows evidences enough of this: for the rest, the only name connected with it is that of Sturla Thordson the Lawman, a man of good position and family, and a prolific author, who was born in 1214 and died 1284; there is, however, no proof that he wrote the present work, though we think passages in it that mention his name show clearly enough that he had something to do with the story of Grettir: on the whole, we are inclined to think that a story of Grettir was either written by him or under his auspices, but that the present tale is the work of a later hand, nor do we think so complete a saga-teller, as his other undoubted works show him to have been, would ever have finished his story with the epilogue of Spes and Thorstein Dromund, steeped as that latter part is with

the spirit of the mediæval romances, even to the distinct appropriation of a marked and well-known episode of the Tristram; though it must be admitted that he had probably plenty of opportunity for being versed in that romance, as Tristram was first translated into the tongue of Norway in the year 1226, by Brother Robert, at the instance of King Hakonson, whose great favourite Sturla Thordson was, and whose history was written by him.

For our translation of this work we have no more to say than to apologise for its shortcomings, and to hope, that in spite of them, it will give some portion of the pleasure to our readers which we felt in accomplishing it ourselves.

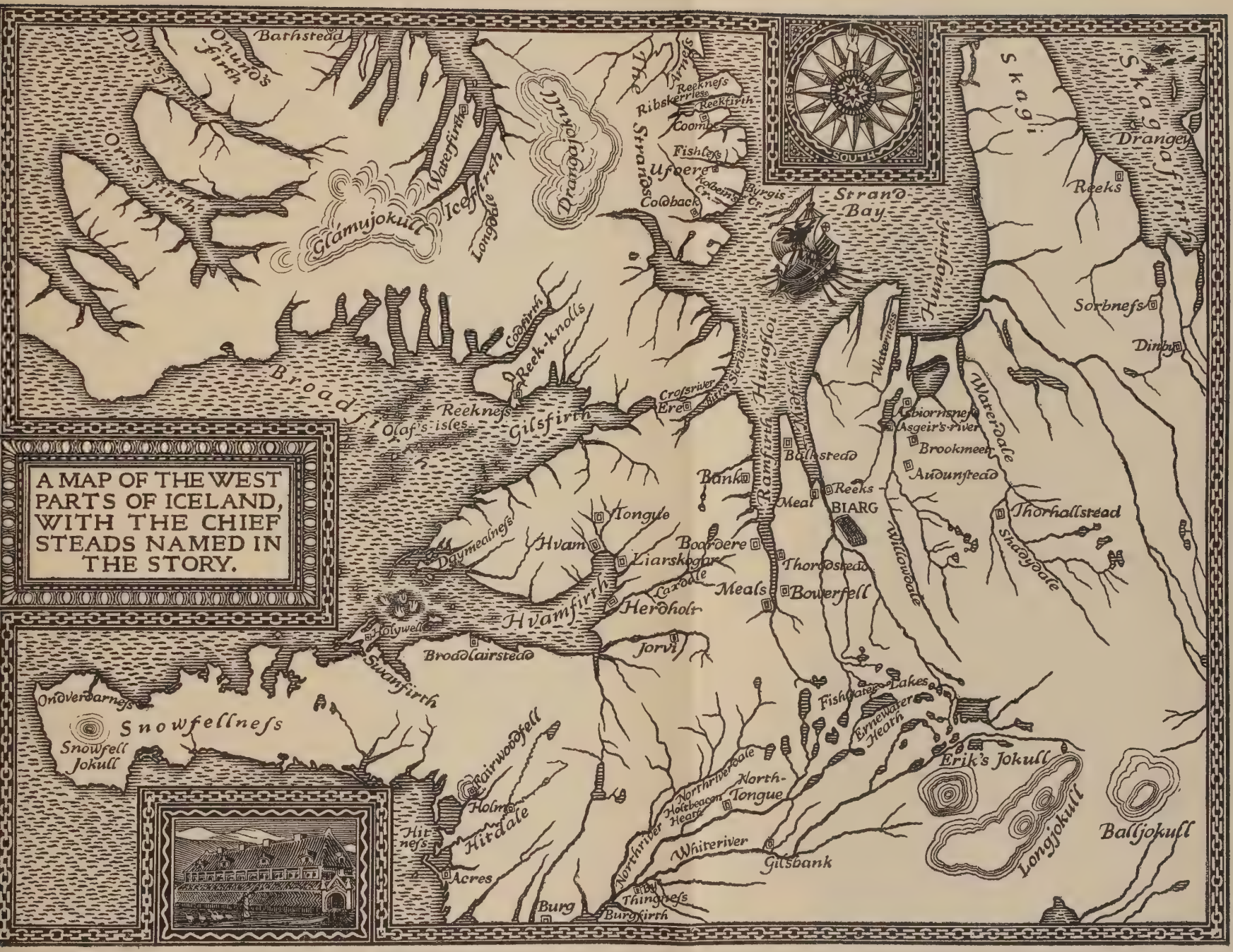
EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON.
WILLIAM MORRIS.

London, April 1869.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE STORY

872. The battle of Hafrs-firth.
874. Begins the settlement of Iceland.
c. 897. Thrand and Ufeigh Grettir settle Gnup-Wards-rape.
c. 900. Onund Treefoot comes to Iceland.
c. 920. Death of Onund Treefoot.
929. The Althing established.
997 (?). Grettir born.
1000. Christianity sanctioned by law.
1004. Skapti Thorodson made lawman.
1011. Grettir slays Skeggi; goes abroad, banished for three years.
1012. Slaying of Thorir Paunch and his fellows in Haramsey. Earl Eric goes to Denmark.
1013. Slaying of Biorn at the Island of Gartar. Slaying of Thorgils Makson. Illugi Asmundson born. Death of Thorkel Krafla.
1014. Slaying of Gunnar in Tunsberg. Grettir goes back to Iceland; fights with the men of Meal on Ramfirth-neck. Heath-slayings. Thorgeir Havarson outlawed. Fight with Glam the ghost.
1015. Fight of Nesjar in Norway. Slaying of Thorbiorn Tardy. Grettir fares abroad. Burning of the sons of Thorir of Garth. Death of Asmund the Greyhaired.
1016. Grettir meets King Olaf; fails to bear iron; goes east to Tunsberg to Thorstein Dromund. Slaying of Atli of Biarg. Grettir outlawed at the Thing for the burning of the sons of Thorir; his return to Iceland. Slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain and his son Arnor.
1017. Grettir at Reek-knolls. Law-suit for the slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain. Grettir taken by the Icefirth churls.
1018. Grettir at Liarskogar with Thorstein Kuggson; his travels to the East to Skapti the Lawman and Thorhall of Tongue, and thence to the Keel-mountain, where he met Hallmund (Air) for the first time.

1019-21. Grettir on Ernewater-heath.
1021. Grettir goes to the Marshes.
1022-24. Grettir in Fairwoodfell.
1024. Grettir visits Hallmund again.
1025. Grettir discovers Thorirsdale.
1025-26. Grettir travels round by the East; haunts Madder-dale-heath and Reek-heath.
1026. Thorstein Kuggson slain.
1027. Grettir at Sandheaps in Bard-dale.
1028. Grettir haunts the west by Broadfirth-dales, meets Thorod Snorrison.
1028-31. Grettir in Drangey.
1029. Grettir visits Heronness-thing.
1030. Grettir fetches fire from Reeks. Skapti the Law-man dies.
1031. Death of Snorri Godi and Grettir Asmundson.
1033. Thorbiorn Angle slain.


A MAP OF THE WEST PARTS OF ICELAND, WITH THE CHIEF STEADS NAMED IN THE STORY.
Bathstead
Onund's Firth
Dyri's Firth
Orn's Firth
Waterfirth
Glámujokull
Icefirth
Longdale
Drangajokull
The Strands
Arness
Reekness
Ribskerries
Reekfirth
Coombs
Fishless
Ufoere
Kolbein's Cr.
Byrgis Cr.
Coldback
Strand Bay
Skagi
Skagafirth
Drangey
Reeks
Sorbness
Dinby
Hunafirth
Waterness
Waterdale
Asbiornsness
Asgeir's river
Brookmeet
Audunstead
Thorhallstead
Shadydale
Willowdale
Codfirth
Reek-knolls
Broadfirth
Reekness
Olaf's isles
Gilsfirth
Crossriver
Ere
Bitra Skridinsenni
Hunafloi
Midfirth
Ramfirth
Balkstead
Bank
Meal
Reeks
BIARG
Tongue
Hvam
Dgymealness
Boordere
Liarskogar
Thorodstead
Meals
Bowerfell
Laxdale
Herdholt
Hvamfirth
Holywell
Broadlairstead
Jorvi
Swanfirth
Ondverdarness
Snowfellness
Snowfell Jokull
Fishwater Lakes
Ernewater Heath
Erik's Jokull
Longjokull
Balljokull
Fairwoodfell
Holm
Hitdale
Hitness
Acres
Burg
Burgfirth
Thingness
Northriver
Northriverdale
Holtbeacon Heath
North-Tongue
Whiteriver
Gilsbank

THIS FIRST PART TELLS OF THE FOREFATHERS OF GRETTIR IN NORWAY, AND HOW THEY FLED AWAY BEFORE HARALD FAIRHAIR, AND SETTLED IN ICELAND; AND OF THEIR DEEDS IN ICELAND BEFORE GRETTIR WAS BORN.

CHAPTER I

THERE was a man named Onund, who was the son of Ufeigh Clubfoot, the son of Ivar the Smiter; Onund was brother of Gudbiorg, the mother of Gudbrand Ball, the father of Asta, the mother of King Olaf the Saint. Onund was an Uplander by the kin of his mother; but the kin of his father dwelt chiefly about Rogaland and Hordaland. He was a great viking, and went harrying west over the Sea.[1] Balk of Sotanes, the son of Blæng, was with him herein, and Orm the Wealthy withal, and Hallvard was the name of the third of them. They had five ships, all well manned, and therewith they harried in the South-isles;[2] and when they came to Barra, they found there a king, called Kiarval, and he, too, had five ships. They gave him battle, and a hard fray there was. The men of Onund were of the eagerest, and on either side many fell; but the end of it was that the king fled with only one ship. So there the men of Onund took both ships and much wealth, and abode there through the winter. For three summers they harried throughout Ireland and Scotland, and thereafter went to Norway.

CHAPTER II

IN those days were there great troubles in Norway. Harald the Unshorn,[3] son of Halfdan the Black, was pushing forth for the kingdom. Before that he was King of the Uplands; then he went north through the land, and had many

[1] "West over the Sea," means in the Sagas the British Isles, and the islands about them—the Hebrides, Orkneys, &c.

[2] South-isles are the Hebrides, and the other islands down to Man.

[3] "Harald the Unshorn:" he was so called at first because he made

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battles there, and ever won the day. Thereafter he harried south in the land, and wheresoever he came, laid all under him; but when he came to Hordaland, swarms of folk came thronging against him; and their captains were Kiotvi the Wealthy, and Thorir Longchin and those of South Rogaland, and King Sulki. Geirmund Helskin was then in the west over the Sea; nor was he in that battle, though he had a kingdom in Hordaland.

Now that autumn Onund and his fellows came from the west over the Sea; and when Thorir Longchin and King Kiotvi heard thereof, they sent men to meet them, and prayed them for help, and promised them honours. Then they entered into fellowship with Thorir and his men; for they were exceeding fain to try their strength, and said that there would they be whereas the fight was hottest.

Now was the meeting with Harald the King in Rogaland, in that firth which is called Hafrsfirth; and both sides had many men. This was the greatest battle that has ever been fought in Norway, and hereof most Sagas tell; for of those is ever most told, of whom the Sagas are made; and thereto came folk from all the land, and many from other lands, and swarms of vikings.

Now Onund laid his ship alongside one board of the ship of Thorir Longchin, about the midst of the fleet, but King Harald laid his on the other board, because Thorir was the greatest bearserk, and the stoutest of men; so the fight was of the fiercest on either side. Then the king cried on his bearserks for an onslaught, and they were called the Wolf-coats, for on them would no steel bite, and when they set on nought might withstand them. Thorir defended him very stoutly, and fell in all hardihood on board his ship; then was it cleared from stem to stern, and cut from the grapplings, and let drift astern betwixt the other ships. Thereafter the king's

a vow not to cut his hair till he was sole king of Norway. When he had attained to this, and Earl Rognvald had taken him to the bath and trimmed his hair, he was called "Fair-hair," from its length and beauty.

men laid their ship alongside Onund's, and he was in the forepart thereof and fought manly; then the king's folk said, "Lo, a forward man in the forecastle there, let him have somewhat to mind him how that he was in this battle." Now Onund put one foot out over the bulwark and dealt a blow at a man, and even therewith a spear was aimed at him, and as he put the blow from him he bent backward withal, and one of the king's forecastle men smote at him, and the stroke took his leg below the knee and sheared it off, and forthwith made him unmeet for fight. Then fell the more part of the folk on board his ship; but Onund was brought to the ship of him who is called Thrand; he was the son of Biorn, and brother of Eyvind the Eastman; he was in the fight against King Harald and lay on the other board of Onund's ship. The Forefathers of Grettir

But now, after these things, the more part of the fleet scattered in flight; Thrand and his men, with the other vikings, got them away each as he might, and sailed west over the Sea; Onund went with him, and Balk and Hallvard Sweeping; Onund was healed, but went with a wooden leg all his life after; therefore as long as he lived was he called Onund Treefoot.

CHAPTER III

AT that time were many great men west over the Sea, such as had fled from their lands in Norway before King Harald, because he had made all those outlaws, who had met him in battle, and taken to him their possessions. So, when Onund was healed of his wounds, he and Thrand went to meet Geirmund Helskin, because he was the most famed of vikings west there over the Sea, and they asked him whether he had any mind to seek after that kingdom which he had in Hordaland, and offered him their fellowship herein; for they deemed they had a sore loss of their lands there, since Onund was both mighty and of great kin.

Geirmund said that so great had grown the strength of King Harald, that he deemed there was little hope that they would win honour in their war with him when men had been

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worsted, even when all the folk of the land had been drawn together; and yet withal that he was loth to become a king's thrall and pray for that which was his own; that he would find somewhat better to do than that; and now, too, he was no longer young. So Onund and his fellows went back to the South-isles, and there met many of their friends.

There was a man, Ufeigh by name, who was bynamed Grettir; he was the son of Einar, the son of Olvir Bairn-Carle; he was brother to Oleif the Broad, the father of Thormod Shaft; Steinulf was the name of Olvir Bairn-Carle's son, he was the father of Una whom Thorbiorn Salmon-Carle had to wife. Another son of Olvir Bairn-Carle was Steinmod, the father of Konal, who was the father of Aldis of Barra. The son of Konal was Steinmod, the father of Haldora, the wife of Eilif, the son of Ketil the One-handed. Ufeigh Grettir had to wife Asny, the daughter of Vestar Hængson; and Asmund the Beardless and Asbiorn were the sons of Ufeigh Grettir, but his daughters were these, Aldis, and Asa, and Asvor. Ufeigh had fled away west over the Sea before Harald the King, and so had Thormod Shaft his kinsman, and had with them their kith and kin; and they harried in Scotland, and far and wide west beyond the Sea.

Now Thrand and Onund Treefoot made west for Ireland to find Eyvind the Eastman, Thrand's brother, who was Land-ward along the coasts of Ireland; the mother of Eyvind was Hlif, the daughter of Rolf, son of Ingiald, the son of King Frodi; but Thrand's mother was Helga, the daughter of Ondott the Crow; Biorn was the name of the father of Eyvind and Thrand, he was the son of Rolf from Am; he had had to flee from Gothland, for that he had burned in his house Sigfast, the son-in-law of King Solver; and thereafter had he gone to Norway, and was the next winter with Grim the Hersir, the son of Kolbiorn the Abasher. Now Grim had a mind to murder Biorn for his money, so he fled thence to Ondott the Crow, who dwelt in Hvinisfirth in Agdir; he received Biorn well, and Biorn was with him in the winter, but was in warfare in summer-tide, until Hlif his wife died; and after

that Ondott gave Biorn Helga his daughter, and then Biorn left off warring.

Now thereon Eyvind took to him the war-ships of his father, and was become a great chief west over the Sea; he wedded Rafarta, the daughter of Kiarval, King of Ireland; their sons were Helgi the Lean and Snœbiorn.

So when Thrand and Onund came to the South-isles, there they met Ufeigh Grettir and Thormod Shaft, and great friendship grew up betwixt them, for each thought he had gained from hell the last who had been left behind in Norway while the troubles there were at the highest. But Onund was exceeding moody, and when Thrand marked it, he asked what he was brooding over in his mind. Onund answered, and sang this stave:

"What joy since that day can I get
When shield-fire's thunder last I met;
Ah, too soon clutch the claws of ill;
For that axe-edge shall grieve me still.
In eyes of fighting man and thane,
My strength and manhood are but vain,
This is the thing that makes me grow
A joyless man; is it enow?"

Thrand answered that whereso he was, he would still be deemed a brave man, "And now it is meet for thee to settle down and get married, and I would put forth my word and help, if I but knew whereto thou lookest."

Onund said he did in manly wise, but that his good hope for matches of any gain was gone by now.

Thrand answered, "Ufeigh has a daughter who is called Asa, thitherward will we turn if it seem good to thee." Onund showed that he was willing enough hereto; so afterwards they talked the matter over with Ufeigh; he answered well, and said that he knew how that Onund was a man of great kin and rich of chattels; "but his lands," said he, "I put at low worth, nor do I deem him to be a hale man, and withal my daughter is but a child."

Thrand said, that Onund was a brisker man yet than many who were hale of both legs, and so by Thrand's help was this bargain struck; Ufeigh was to give his daughter but chattels for dowry, because those lands that were in Norway neither would lay down any money for.

A little after Thrand wooed the daughter of Thormod Shaft, and both were to sit in troth for three winters.

So thereafter they went a harrying in the summer, but were in Barra in the winter-tide.

CHAPTER IV

THERE were two vikings, called Vigbiod and Vestmar; they were South-islanders, and lay out both winter and summer; they had thirteen ships, and harried mostly in Ireland, and did many an ill deed there till Eyvind the Eastman took the land-wardship; thereafter they got them gone to the South-isles, and harried there and all about the firths of Scotland: against these went Thrand and Onund, and heard that they had sailed to that island which is called Bute. Now Onund and his folk came there with five ships; and when the vikings see their ships and know how many they are, they deem they have enough strength gathered there, and take their weapons and lay their ships in the midst betwixt two cliffs, where was a great and deep sound; only on one side could they be set on, and that with but five ships at once. Now Onund was the wisest of men, and bade lay five ships up into the sound, so that he and his might have back way when they would, for there was plenty of sea-room astern. On one board of them too was a certain island, and under the lee thereof he let one ship lie, and his men brought many great stones forth on to the sheer cliffs above, yet might not be seen withal from the ships.

Now the vikings laid their ships boldly enough for the attack, and thought that the others quailed; and Vigbiod asked who they were that were in such jeopardy. Thrand said that he was the brother of Eyvind the Eastman, "and here beside me is Onund Treefoot my fellow."

Then laughed the vikings, and shouted:

"Treefoot, Treefoot, foot of tree,
Trolls take thee and thy company.

"Yea, a sight it is seldom seen of us, that such men should go into battle as have no might over themselves."

Onund said that they could know nought thereof ere it were tried; and withal they laid their ships alongside one of the other, and there began a great fight, and either side did boldly. But when they came to handy blows, Onund gave back toward the cliff, and when the vikings saw this, they deemed he was minded to flee, and made towards his ship, and came as nigh to the cliff as they might. But in that very point of time those came forth on to the edge of the cliff who were appointed so to do, and sent at the vikings so great a flight of stones that they might not withstand it.

Then fell many of the viking-folk, and others were hurt so that they might not bear weapon; and withal they were fain to draw back, and might not, because their ships were even then come into the narrowest of the sound, and they were huddled together both by the ships and the stream; but Onund and his men set on fiercely, whereas Vigbiod was, but Thrand set on Vestmar, and won little thereby; so, when the folk were thinned on Vigbiod's ship, Onund's men and Onund himself got ready to board her; that Vigbiod saw, and cheered on his men without stint; then he turned to meet Onund, and the more part fled before him: but Onund bade his men mark how it went between them; for he was of huge strength. Now they set a log of wood under Onund's knee, so that he stood firmly enow; the viking fought his way forward along the ship till he reached Onund, and he smote at him with his sword, and the stroke took the shield, and sheared off all it met; and then the sword drove into the log that Onund had under his knee, and stuck fast therein; and Vigbiod stooped in drawing it out, and even therewith Onund smote at his shoulder in such wise, that he cut the arm from off him, and then was the viking unmeet for battle.

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But when Vestmar knew that his fellow was fallen, he leaped into the furthermost ship and fled with all those who might reach her. Thereafter they ransacked the fallen men; and by then was Vigbiod nigh to his death: Onund went up to him, and sang:

"Yea, seest thou thy wide wounds bleed?
What of shrinking didst thou heed
In the one-foot sling of gold?
What scratch here dost thou behold?
And in e'en such wise as this
Many an axe-breaker there is
Strong of tongue and weak of hand:
Tried thou wert, and mightst not stand."

So there they took much spoil and sailed back to Barra in the autumn.

CHAPTER V

THE summer after this they made ready to fare west to Ireland. But at that time Balk and Hallvard betook themselves from west over the Sea, and went out to Iceland, for from thence came tales of land good to choose. Balk settled land in Ramfirth and dwelt at either Balkstead; Hallvard settled Sweepingsfirth, and Hallwick out to the Stair, and dwelt there.

Now Thrand and Onund met Eyvind the Eastman, and he received his brother well; but when he knew that Onund was come with him, then he waxed wroth, and would fain set on him. Thrand bade him do it not, and said that it was not for him to wage war against Northmen, and least of all such men as fared peaceably. Eyvind said that he fared otherwise before, and had broken the peace of Kiarval the King, and that he should now pay for all. Many words the brothers had over this, till Thrand said at last that one fate should befall both him and Onund; and then Eyvind let himself be appeased.

So they dwelt there long that summer, and went on warfare with Eyvind who found Onund to be the bravest of men.

In the autumn they fared to the South-isles, and Eyvind gave to Thrand to take all the heritage of their father, if Biorn should die before Thrand. The Fore-fathers of Grettir

Now were the twain in the South-isles until they wedded their wives, and some winters after withal.

CHAPTER VI

AND now it came to pass that Biorn, the father of Thrand, died; and when Grim the Hersir hears thereof he went to meet Ondott Crow, and claimed the goods left by Biorn; but Ondott said that Thrand had the heritage after his father; Grim said that Thrand was west over Seas, and that Biorn was a Gothlander of kin, and that the king took the heritage of all outland men. Ondott said that he should keep the goods for the hands of Thrand, his daughter's son; and therewith Grim gat him gone, and had nought for his claiming the goods.

Now Thrand had news of his father's death, and straightway got ready to go from the South-isles, and Onund Tree-foot with him; but Ufeigh Grettir and Thormod Shaft went out to Iceland with their kith and kin, and came out to the Eres in the south country, and dwelt the first winter with Thorbiorn Salmon-Carle.

Thereafter they settled Gnup-Wards'-rape, Ufeigh, the outward part, between Thwart-river and Kalf-river, and he dwelt at Ufeigh's-stead by Stone-holt; but Thormod settled the eastward part, and abode at Shaft-holt.

The daughters of Thormod were these: Thorvor, mother of Thorod the Godi[1] of Hialli, and Thora, mother of Thorstein the Godi, the father of Biarni the Sage.

Now it is to be said of Thrand and Onund that they sailed from the lands west over the Sea toward Norway, and had fair

[1] "Godi" is the name for the rulers of the thirty-nine districts into which the republic of Iceland was anciently divided. While the ancient religion lasted, their office combined in itself the highest civil and sacerdotal functions.

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wind, and such speed, that no rumour of their voyage was abroad till they came to Ondott Crow.

He gave Thrand good welcome, and told him how Grim the Hersir had claimed the heritage left by Biorn. "Meeter it seems to me, kinsman," said he, "that thou take the heritage of thy father and not king's-thralls; good luck has befallen thee, in that none knows of thy coming, but it misdoubts me that Grim will come upon one or other of us if he may; therefore I would that thou shouldst take the inheritance to thee, and get thee gone to other lands."

Thrand said that so he would do, he took to him the chattels and got away from Norway at his speediest; but before he sailed into the sea, he asked Onund Treefoot whether he would not make for Iceland with him; Onund said he would first go see his kin and friends in the south country.

Thrand said, "Then must we part now, but I would that thou shouldst aid my kin, for on them will vengeance fall if I get off clear; but to Iceland shall I go, and I would that thou withal shouldst make that journey."

Onund gave his word to all, and they parted in good love. So Thrand went to Iceland, and Ufeigh and Thormod Shaft received him well. Thrand dwelt at Thrand's-holt, which is west of Steer's-river.

CHAPTER VII

ONUND went south to Rogaland, and met there many of his kin and friends; he dwelt there in secret at a man's called Kolbein. Now he heard that the King had taken his lands to him and set a man thereover who was called Harek, who was a farmer of the King's; so on a night Onund went to him, and took him in his house; there Harek was led out and cut down, and Onund took all the chattels they found and burnt the homestead; and thereafter he abode in many places that winter.

But that autumn Grim the Hersir slew Ondott Crow, because he might not get the heritage-money for the king; and that same night of his slaying, Signy, his wife, brought aboard

ship all her chattels, and fared with her sons, Asmund and Asgrim, to Sighvat her father; but a little after sent her sons to Soknadale to Hedin her foster-father; but that seemed good to them but for a little while, and they would fain go back again to their mother; so they departed and came at Yule-tide to Ingiald the Trusty at Hvin; he took them in because of the urgency of Gyda his wife, and they were there the winter through. But in spring came Onund north to Agdir, because he had heard of the slaying of Ondott Crow; but when he found Signy he asked her what help she would have of him. The Forefathers of Grettir

She said that she would fain have vengeance on Grim the Hersir for the slaying of Ondott. Then were the sons of Ondott sent for, and when they met Onund Treefoot, they made up one fellowship together, and had spies abroad on the doings of Grim. Now in the summer was a great ale-drinking held at Grim's, because he had bidden to him Earl Audun; and when Onund and the sons of Ondott knew thereof they went to Grim's homestead and laid fire to the house, for they were come there unawares, and burnt Grim the Hersir therein, and nigh thirty men, and many good things they took there withal. Then went Onund to the woods, but the sons of Ondott took a boat of Ingiald's, their foster-father's, and rowed away therein, and lay hid a little way off the homestead. Earl Audun came to the feast, even as had been settled afore, and there "missed friend from stead." Then he gathered men to him, and dwelt there some nights, but nought was heard of Onund and his fellows; and the Earl slept in a loft with two men.

Onund had full tidings from the homestead, and sent after those brothers; and, when they met, Onund asked them whether they would watch the farm or fall on the Earl; but they chose to set on the Earl. So they drove a beam at the loft-doors and broke them in; then Asmund caught hold of the two who were with the Earl, and cast them down so hard that they were well-nigh slain; but Asgrim ran at the Earl, and bade him render up weregild for his father, since he had been

in the plot and the onslaught with Grim the Hersir, when Ondott Crow was slain. The Earl said he had no money with him there, and prayed for delay of that payment. Then Asgrim set his spear-point to the Earl's breast and bade him pay there and then; so the Earl took a chain from his neck, and three gold rings, and a cloak of rich web, and gave them up. Asgrim took the goods and gave the Earl a name, and called him Audun Goaty.

But when the bonders and neighbouring folk were ware that war was come among them, they went abroad and would bring help to the Earl, and a hard fight there was, for Onund had many men, and there fell many good bonders and courtmen of the Earl. Now came the brothers, and told how they had fared with the Earl, and Onund said that it was ill that he was not slain, "that would have been somewhat of a revenge on the King for our loss at his hands of fee and friends." They said that this was a greater shame to the Earl; and therewith they went away up to Sorreldale to Eric Alefain, a king's lord, and he took them in for all the winter.

Now at Yule they drank turn and turn about with a man called Hallstein, who was bynamed Horse; Eric gave the first feast, well and truly, and then Hallstein gave his, but thereat was there bickering between them, and Hallstein smote Eric with a deer-horn; Eric gat no revenge therefor, but went home straightway. This sore misliked the sons of Ondott, and a little after Asgrim fared to Hallstein's homestead, and went in alone, and gave him a great wound, but those who were therein sprang up and set on Asgrim. Asgrim defended himself well and got out of their hands in the dark; but they deemed they had slain him.

Onund and Asmund heard thereof and supposed him dead, but deemed they might do nought. Eric counselled them to make for Iceland, and said that would be of no avail to abide there in the land (i.e. in Norway), as soon as the King should bring matters about to his liking. So this they did, and made them ready for Iceland and had each one ship. Hallstein lay

wounded, and died before Onund and his folk sailed. Kolbein withal, who is afore mentioned, went abroad with Onund. The Forefathers of Grettir

CHAPTER VIII

NOW Onund and Asmund sailed into the sea when they were ready, and held company together; then sang Onund this stave:

"Meet was I in days agone
For storm, wherein the Sweeping One,
Midst rain of swords, and the darts' breath,
Blew o'er all a gale of death.
Now a maimed, one-footed man
On rollers' steed through waters wan
Out to Iceland must I go;
Ah, the skald is sinking low."

They had a hard voyage of it and much of baffling gales from the south, and drove north into the main; but they made Iceland, and were by then come to the north off Longness when they found where they were: so little space there was betwixt them that they spake together; and Asmund said that they had best sail to Islefirth, and thereto they both agreed; then they beat up toward the land, and a south-east wind sprang up; but when Onund and his folk laid the ship close to the wind, the yard was sprung; then they took in sail, and therewith were driven off to sea; but Asmund got under the lee of Brake-isle, and there lay till a fair wind brought him into Islefirth; Helgi the Lean gave him all Krœkling's-lithe, and he dwelt at South Glass-river; Asgrim his brother came out some winters later and abode at North Glass-river; he was the father of Ellida-Grim, the father of Asgrim Ellida-Grimson.

CHAPTER IX

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NOW it is to be told of Onund Treefoot that he drave out to sea for certain days, but at last the wind got round to the north, and they sailed for land: then those knew who had been there before that they had come west off the Skagi; then they sailed into Strand-Bay, and near to the South-Strands, and there rowed toward them six men in a ten-oared boat, who hailed the big ship, and asked who was their captain; Onund named himself and asked whence they came; they said they were house-carles of Thorvald, from Drangar; Onund asked if all land through the Strands had been settled; they said there was little unsettled in the inner Strands, and none north thereof. Then Onund asked his shipmates, whether they would make for the west country, or take such as they had been told of; they chose to view the land first. So they sailed in up the bay, and brought to in a creek off Arness, then put forth a boat and rowed to land. There dwelt a rich man, Eric Snare, who had taken land betwixt Ingolfs-firth and Ufœra in Fishless; but when Eric knew that Onund was come there, he bade him take of his hands whatso he would, but said that there was little that had not been settled before. Onund said he would first see what there was, so they went landward south past some firths, till they came to Ufœra; then said Eric, "Here is what there is to look to; all from here is unsettled, and right in to the settlements of Biorn." Now a great mountain went down the eastern side of the firth, and snow had fallen thereon; Onund looked on that mountain, and sang:

"Brand-whetter's life awry doth go.
Fair lands and wide full well I know;
Past house, and field, and fold of man
The swift steed of the rollers ran:
My lands and kin I left behind,
That I this latter day might find,
Coldback for sunny meads to have;
Hard fate a bitter bargain drave."

Eric answered, "Many have lost so much in Norway, that it may not be bettered: and I think withal that most lands in the main-settlements are already settled, and therefore I urge thee not to go from hence; but I shall hold to what I spake, that thou mayst have whatso of my lands seems meet to thee." Onund said, that he would take that offer, and so he settled land out from Ufœra over the three creeks, Byrgis Creek, Kolbein's Creek, and Coldback Creek, up to Coldback Cleft. Thereafter Eric gave him all Fishless, and Reekfirth, and all Reekness, out on that side of the Firth; but as to drifts there was nought set forth, for they were then so plentiful that every man had of them what he would. Now Onund set up a household at Coldback, and had many men about him; but when his goods began to grow great he had another stead in Reekfirth. Kolbein dwelt at Kolbein's Creek. So Onund abode in peace for certain winters.

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CHAPTER X

NOW Onund was so brisk a man, that few, even of whole men, could cope with him; and his name withal was well known throughout the land, because of his forefathers. After these things, befell that strife betwixt Ufeigh Grettir and Thorbiorn Earl's-champion, which had such ending, that Ufeigh fell before Thorbiorn in Grettir's Gill, near Heel. There were many drawn together to the sons of Ufeigh concerning the blood-suit, and Onund Treefoot was sent for, and rode south in the spring, and guested at Hvamm, with Aud the Deeply-wealthy, and she gave him exceeding good welcome, because he had been with her west over the Sea. In those days, Olaf Feilan, her son's son, was a man full grown, and Aud was by then worn with great eld; she bade Onund know that she would have Olaf, her kinsman, married, and was fain that he should woo Aldis of Barra, who was cousin to Asa, whom Onund had to wife. Onund deemed the matter hopeful, and Olaf rode south with him. So when Onund met his friends and kin-in-law they bade him abide with them: then was the suit talked over,

and was laid to Kialarnes Thing, for as then the Althing was not yet set up. So the case was settled by umpiredom, and heavy weregild came for the slayings, and Thorbiorn Earl's-champion was outlawed. His son was Solmund, the father of Kari the Singed; father and son dwelt abroad a long time afterwards.

Thrand bade Onund and Olaf to his house, and so did Thormod Shaft, and they backed Olaf's wooing, which was settled with ease, because men knew how mighty a woman Aud was. So the bargain was made, and, so much being done, Onund rode home, and Aud thanked him well for his help to Olaf. That autumn Olaf Feilan wedded Aldis of Barra; and then died Aud the Deeply-wealthy, as is told in the story of the Laxdale men.

CHAPTER XI

ONUND and Asa had two sons; the elder was called Thorgeir, the younger Ufeigh Grettir; but Asa soon died. Thereafter Onund got to wife a woman called Thordis, the daughter of Thorgrim, from Gnup in Midfirth, and akin to Midfirth-Skeggi. Of her Onund had a son called Thorgrim; he was early a big man, and a strong, wise, and good withal in matters of husbandry. Onund dwelt on at Coldback till he was old, then he died in his bed, and is buried in Treefoot's barrow; he was the briskest and lithest of one-footed men who have ever lived in Iceland.

Now Thorgrim took the lead among the sons of Onund, though others of them were older than he; but when he was twenty-five years old he grew grey-haired, and therefore was he bynamed Greypate; Thordis, his mother, was afterwards wedded north in Willowdale, to Audun Skokul, and their son was Asgeir, of Asgeir's-river. Thorgrim Greypate and his brothers had great possessions in common, nor did they divide the goods between them. Now Eric, who farmed at Arness, as is aforesaid, had to wife Alof, daughter of Ingolf, of Ingolfs-firth; and Flosi was the name of their son, a hopeful man, and of many friends. In those days three brothers

came out hither, Ingolf, Ufeigh, and Eyvind, and settled those three firths that are known by their names, and there dwelt afterwards. Olaf was the name of Eyvind's son, he first dwelt at Eyvind's-firth, and after at Drangar, and was a man to hold his own well. The Fore-fathers of Grettir

Now there was no strife betwixt these men while their elders were alive; but when Eric died, it seemed to Flosi, that those of Coldback had no lawful title to the lands which Eric had given to Onund; and from this befell much ill-blood betwixt them; but Thorgrim and his kin still held their lands as before, but they might not risk having sports together. Now Thorgeir was head-man of the household of those brothers in Reekfirth, and would ever be rowing out a-fishing, because in those days were the firths full of fish; so those in the Creek made up their plot; a man there was, a house-carle of Flosi in Arness, called Thorfin, him Flosi sent for Thorgeir's head, and he went and hid himself in the boat-stand; that morning Thorgeir got ready to row out to sea, and two men with him, one called Hamund, the other Brand. Thorgeir went first, and had on his back a leather bottle and drink therein. It was very dark, and as he walked down from the boat-stand Thorfin ran at him, and smote him with an axe betwixt the shoulders, and the axe sank in, and the bottle squeaked, but he let go the axe, for he deemed that there would be little need of binding up, and would save himself as swiftly as might be; and it is to be told of him that he ran off to Arness, and came there before broad day, and told of Thorgeir's slaying, and said that he should have need of Flosi's shelter, and that the only thing to be done was to offer atonement, "for that of all things," said he, "is like to better our strait, great as it has now grown."

Flosi said that he would first hear tidings; "and I am minded to think that thou art afraid after thy big deed."

Now it is to be said of Thorgeir, that he turned from the blow as the axe smote the bottle, nor had he any wound; they made no search for the man because of the dark, so they rowed over the firths to Coldback, and told tidings of

The Forefathers of Grettir

what had happed; thereat folk made much mocking, and called Thorgeir, Bottleback, and that was his by-name ever after.

And this was sung withal:

"The brave men of days of old,
Whereof many a tale is told,
Bathed the whiting of the shield,
In wounds' house on battle-field;
But the honour-missing fool,
Both sides of his slaying tool,
Since faint heart his hand made vain,
With but curdled milk must stain."

CHAPTER XII

IN those days befell such hard times in Iceland, that nought like them has been known there; well-nigh all gettings from the sea, and all drifts, came to an end; and this went on for many seasons. One autumn certain chapmen in a big ship were drifted thither, and were wrecked there in the Creek, and Flosi took to him four or five of them; Stein was the name of their captain; they were housed here and there about the Creek, and were minded to build them a new ship from the wreck; but they were unhandy herein, and the ship was over small stem and stern, but over big amid-ships.

That spring befell a great storm from the north, which lasted near a week, and after the storm men looked after their drifts. Now there was a man called Thorstein, who dwelt at Reekness; he found a whale driven up on the firthward side of the ness, at a place called Rib-Skerries, and the whale was a big whale.

Thorstein sent forthwith a messenger to Wick to Flosi, and so to the nighest farm-steads. Now Einar was the name of the farmer at Combe, and he was a tenant of those of Coldback, and had the ward of their drifts on that side of the firths; and now withal he was ware of the stranding of the whale: and he took boat and rowed past the firths to Byrgis Creek,

whence he sent a man to Coldback; and when Thorgrim and his brothers heard that, they got ready at their swiftest, and were twelve in a ten-oared boat, and Kolbein's sons fared with them, Ivar and Leif, and were six altogether; and all farmers who could bring it about went to the whale. The Fore-fathers of Grettir

Now it is to be told of Flosi that he sent to his kin in Ingolfs-firth and Ufeigh's-firth, and for Olaf Eyvindson, who then dwelt at Drangar; and Flosi came first to the whale, with the men of Wick, then they fell to cutting up the whale, and what was cut was forthwith sent ashore; near twenty men were thereat at first, but soon folk came thronging thither.

Therewith came those of Coldback in four boats, and Thorgrim laid claim to the whale and forbade the men of Wick to shear, allot, or carry off aught thereof: Flosi bade him show if Eric had given Onund Treefoot the drift in clear terms, or else he said he should defend himself with arms. Thorgrim thought he and his too few, and would not risk an onset; but therewithal came a boat rowing up the firth and the rowers therein pulled smartly. Soon they came up, and there was Swan, from Knoll in Biornfirth, and his house-carles; and straightway, when he came, he bade Thorgrim not to let himself be robbed; and great friends they had been heretofore, and now Swan offered his aid. The brothers said they would take it, and therewith set on fiercely; Thorgeir Bottle-back first mounted the whale against Flosi's house-carles; there the afore named Thorfin was cutting the whale, he was in front nigh the head, and stood in a foot-hold he had cut for himself; then Thorgeir said, "Herewith I bring thee back thy axe," and smote him on the neck, and struck off his head.

Flosi was up on the foreshore when he saw that, and he egged on his men to meet them hardily; now they fought long together, but those of Coldback had the best of it: few men there had weapons except the axes wherewith they were cutting up the whale, and some choppers. So the men of Wick gave back to the foreshores; the Eastmen had weapons, and many a wound they gave; Stein, the captain, smote a foot off

Ivar Kolbeinson, but Leif, Ivar's brother, beat to death a fellow of Stein's with a whale-rib; blows were dealt there with whatever could be caught at, and men fell on either side. But now came up Olaf and his men from Drangar in many boats, and gave help to Flosi, and then those of Coldback were borne back overpowered; but they had loaded their boats already, and Swan bade get aboard and thitherward they gave back, and the men of Wick came on after them; and when Swan was come down to the sea, he smote at Stein, the sea-captain, and gave him a great wound, and then leapt aboard his boat; Thorgrim wounded Flosi with a great wound and therewith got away; Olaf cut at Ufeigh Grettir, and wounded him to death; but Thorgeir caught Ufeigh up and leapt aboard with him. Now those of Coldback row east by the firths, and thus they parted; and this was sung of their meeting:

"At Rib-skerries, I hear folk tell,
A hard and dreadful fray befell,
For men unarmed upon that day
With strips of whale-fat made good play.
Fierce steel-gods these in turn did meet
With blubber-slices nowise sweet;
Certes a wretched thing it is
To tell of squabbles such as this."

After these things was peace settled between them, and these suits were laid to the Althing; there Thorod the Godi and Midfirth-Skeggi, with many of the south-country folk, aided those of Coldback; Flosi was outlawed, and many of those who had been with him; and his moneys were greatly drained because he chose to pay up all weregild himself. Thorgrim and his folk could not show that they had paid money for the lands and drifts which Flosi claimed. Thorkel Moon was law-man then, and he was bidden to give his decision; he said that to him it seemed law, that something had been paid for those lands, though mayhap not their full worth; "For so did Steinvor the Old to Ingolf, my grandfather, that she had from him all Rosmwhale-ness and gave therefor a spotted

cloak, nor has that gift been voided, though certes greater flaws be therein: but here I lay down my rede," said he, "that the land be shared, and that both sides have equal part therein; and henceforth be it made law, that each man have the drifts before his own lands." Now this was done, and the land was so divided that Thorgrim and his folk had to give up Reekfirth and all the lands by the firth-side, but Combe they were to keep still. Ufeigh was atoned with a great sum; Thorfin was unatoned, and boot was given to Thorgeir for the attack on his life; and thereafter were they set at one together. Flosi took ship to Norway with Stein, the ship-master, and sold his lands in the Wick to Geirmund Hiuka-timber, who dwelt there afterwards. Now that ship which the chapmen had made was very broad of beam, so that men called it the Treetub, and by that name is the creek known: but in that keel did Flosi go out, but was driven back to Axefirth, whereof came the tale of Bodmod, and Grimulf, and Gerpir. The Forefathers of Grettir

CHAPTER XIII

NOW after this the brothers Thorgrim and Thorgeir shared their possessions. Thorgrim took the chattels and Thorgeir the land; Thorgrim betook himself to Midfirth and bought land at Biarg by the counsel of Skeggi; he had to wife Thordis, daughter of Asmund of Asmund's-peak, who had settled the Thingere lands: Thorgrim and Thordis had a son who was called Asmund; he was a big man and a strong, wise withal, and the fairest-haired of men, but his head grew grey early, wherefore he was called Asmund the Grey-haired. Thorgrim grew to be a man very busy about his household, and kept all his men well to their work. Asmund would do but little work, so the father and son had small fellowship together; and so things fared till Asmund had grown of age; then he asked his father for travelling money; Thorgrim said he should have little enough, but gave him somewhat of huckstering wares.

Then Asmund went abroad, and his goods soon grew great; he sailed to sundry lands, and became the greatest of

The Forefathers of Grettir

merchants, and very rich; he was a man well beloved and trusty, and many kinsmen he had in Norway of great birth.

One autumn he guested east in the Wick with a great man who was called Thorstein; he was an Uplander of kin, and had a sister called Ranveig, one to be chosen before all women; her Asmund wooed, and gained her by the help of Thorstein her brother; and there Asmund dwelt a while and was held in good esteem: he had of Ranveig a son hight Thorstein, strong, and the fairest of men, and great of voice; a man tall of growth he was, but somewhat slow in his mien, and therefore was he called Dromund. Now when Thorstein was nigh grown up, his mother fell sick and died, and thereafter Asmund had no joy in Norway; the kin of Thorstein's mother took his goods, and him withal to foster; but Asmund betook himself once more to sea-faring, and became a man of great renown. Now he brought his ship into Huna-water, and in those days was Thorkel Krafla chief over the Waterdale folk; and he heard of Asmund's coming out, and rode to the ship and bade Asmund to his house; and he dwelt at Marstead in Waterdale; so Asmund went to be guest there. This Thorkel was the son of Thorgrim the Godi of Corn-river, and was a very wise man.

Now this was after the coming out of Bishop Frederick, and Thorvald Kodran's son, and they dwelt at the Brooks'-meet, when these things came to pass: they were the first to preach the law of Christ in the north country; Thorkel let himself be signed with the cross and many men with him, and things enow betid betwixt the bishop and the north-country folk which come not into this tale.

Now at Thorkel's was a woman brought up, Asdis by name, who was the daughter of Bard, the son of Jokul, the son of Ingimund the Old, the son of Thorstein, the son of Ketil the Huge: the mother of Asdis was Aldis the daughter of Ufeigh Grettir, as is aforesaid; Asdis was as yet unwedded, and was deemed the best match among women, both for her kin and her possessions; Asmund was grown weary of sea-faring, and was fain to take up his abode in Iceland; so he took up the word, and wooed this woman. Thorkel knew

well all his ways, that he was a rich man and of good counsel to hold his wealth; so that came about, that Asmund got Asdis to wife; he became a bosom friend of Thorkel, and a great dealer in matters of farming, cunning in the law, and far-reaching. And now a little after this Thorgrim Greypate died at Biarg, and Asmund took the heritage after him and dwelt there. Of Grettir as a child

HERE BEGINS THE STORY OF THE LIFE OF GRETTIR THE STRONG.

CHAPTER XIV. OF GRETTIR AS A CHILD, AND HIS FROWARD WAYS WITH HIS FATHER.

ASMUND the Grey-haired kept house at Biarg; great and proud was his household, and many men he had about him, and was a man much beloved. These were were the children of him and Asdis: Atli was the eldest son; a man yielding and soft-natured, easy, and meek withal, and all men liked him well: another son they had called Grettir; he was very froward in his childhood; of few words, and rough; worrying both in word and deed. Little fondness he got from his father Asmund, but his mother loved him right well.

Grettir Asmundson was fair to look on, broad-faced, short-faced, red-haired, and much freckled; not of quick growth in his childhood.

Thordis was a daughter of Asmund, whom Glum, the son of Uspak, the son of Kiarlak of Skridinsenni, afterwards had to wife. Ranveig was another daughter of Asmund; she was the wife of Gamli, the son of Thorhal, the Vendlander; they kept house at Meals in Ramfirth; their son was Grim. The son of Glum and Thordis, the daughter of Asmund, was Uspak, who quarrelled with Odd, the son of Ufeigh, as is told in the Bandamanna Saga.

Grettir grew up at Biarg till he was ten years old; then he began to get on a little; but Asmund bade him do some work; Grettir answered that work was not right meet for him, but asked what he should do.

Of Grettir as a child

Says Asmund, "Thou shalt watch my home-geese."

Grettir answered and said, "A mean work, a milksop's work."

Asmund said, "Turn it well out of hand, and then matters shall get better between us."

Then Grettir betook himself to watching the home-geese; fifty of them there were, with many goslings; but no long time went by before he found them a troublesome drove, and the goslings slow-paced withal. Thereat he got sore worried, for little did he keep his temper in hand. So some time after this, wayfaring men found the goslings strewn about dead, and the home-geese broken-winged; and this was in autumn. Asmund was mightily vexed hereat, and asked if Grettir had killed the fowl: he sneered mockingly, and answered:

"Surely as winter comes, shall I
Twist the goslings' necks awry.
If in like case are the geese,
I have finished each of these."

"Thou shalt kill them no more," said Asmund.

"Well, *a friend should warn a friend of ill*," said Grettir.

"Another work shall be found for thee then," said Asmund.

"*More one knows the more one tries*," said Grettir; "and what shall I do now?"

Asmund answered, "Thou shalt rub my back at the fire, as I have been wont to have it done."

"Hot for the hand, truly," said Grettir; "but still a milksop's work."

Now Grettir went on with this work for a while; but autumn came on, and Asmund became very fain of heat, and he spurs Grettir on to rub his back briskly. Now, in those times there were wont to be large fire-halls at the homesteads, wherein men sat at long fires in the evenings; boards were set before the men there, and afterwards folk slept out sideways from the fires; there also women worked at the wool in the

daytime. Now, one evening, when Grettir had to rub Asmund's back, the old carle said, Of Grettir as a child

"Now thou wilt have to put away thy sloth, thou milksop."

Says Grettir, "*Ill is it to goad the foolhardy.*"

Asmund answers, "Thou wilt ever be a good-for-nought."

Now Grettir sees where in one of the seats stood wool-combs: one of these he caught up, and let it go all down Asmund's back. He sprang up, and was mad wroth thereat; and was going to smite Grettir with his staff, but he ran off. Then came the housewife, and asked what was this to-do betwixt them. Then Grettir answered by this ditty:

"This jewel-strewer, O ground of gold,
(His counsels I deem over bold),
On both these hands that trouble sow,
(Ah bitter pain) will burn me now;
Therefore with wool-comb's nails unshorn
Somewhat ring-strewer's back is torn:
The hook-clawed bird that wrought his wound—
Lo, now I see it on the ground."

Hereupon was his mother sore vexed, that he should have taken to a trick like this; she said he would never fail to be the most reckless of men. All this nowise bettered matters between Asmund and Grettir.

Now, some time after this, Asmund had a talk with Grettir, that he should watch his horses. Grettir said this was more to his mind than the back-rubbing.

"Then shalt thou do as I bid thee," said Asmund. "I have a dun mare, which I call Keingala; she is so wise as to shifts of weather, thaws, and the like, that rough weather will never fail to follow, when she will not go out on grazing. At such times thou shalt lock the horses up under cover; but keep them to grazing on the mountain neck yonder, when winter comes on. Now I shall deem it needful that thou turn this work out of hand better than the two I have set thee to already."

Of Grettir as a child

Grettir answered: "This is a cold work and a manly, but I deem it ill to trust in the mare, for I know none who has done it yet."

Now Grettir took to the horse-watching, and so the time went on till past Yule-time; then came on much cold weather with snow, that made grazing hard to come at. Now Grettir was ill clad, and as yet little hardened, and he began to be starved by the cold; but Keingala grazed away in the windiest place she could find, let the weather be as rough as it would. Early as she might go to the pasture, never would she go back to stable before nightfall. Now Grettir deemed that he must think of some scurvy trick or other, that Keingala might be paid in full for her way of grazing: so, one morning early, he comes to the horse-stable, opens it, and finds Keingala standing all alone before the crib; for, whatever food was given to the horses with her, it was her way to get it all to herself. Grettir got on her back, and had a sharp knife in his hand, and drew it right across Keingala's shoulder, and then all along both sides of the back. Thereat the mare, being both fat and shy, gave a mad bound, and kicked so fiercely, that her hooves clattered against the wall. Grettir fell off; but, getting on his legs, strove to mount her again. Now their struggle is of the sharpest, but the end of it is, that he flays off the whole of the strip along the back to the loins. Thereafter he drove the horses out on grazing; Keingala would bite but at her back, and when noon was barely past, she started off, and ran back to the house. Grettir now locks the stable and goes home. Asmund asked Grettir where the horses were. He said that he had stabled them as he was wont. Asmund said that rough weather was likely to be at hand, as the horses would not keep at their grazing in such weather as now it was.

Grettir said, "*Oft fail in wisdom folk of better trust.*"

Now the night goes by, but no rough weather came on. Grettir drove off the horses, but Keingala cannot bear the grazing. This seemed strange to Asmund, as the weather

changed in nowise from what it had been theretofore. The third morning Asmund went to the horses, and, coming to Keingala, said,

Of Grettir as a child

"I must needs deem these horses to be in sorry case, good as the winter has been, but thy sides will scarce lack flesh, my dun."

"*Things boded will happen*," said Grettir, "*but so will things unboded.*"

Asmund stroked the back of the mare, and lo, the hide came off beneath his hand; he wondered how this could have happened, and said it was likely to be Grettir's doing. Grettir sneered mockingly, but said nought. Now goodman Asmund went home talking as one mad; he went straight to the fire-hall, and as he came he heard the goodwife say, "It were good indeed if the horse-keeping of my kinsman had gone off well."

Then Asmund sang this stave:

"Grettir has in such wise played,
That Keingala has he flayed,
Whose trustiness would be my boast
(Proudest women talk the most);
So the cunning lad has wrought,
Thinking thereby to do nought
Of my biddings any more.
In thy mind turn these words o'er."

The housewife answered, "I know not which is least to my mind, that thou shouldst ever be bidding him work, or that he should turn out all his work in one wise."

"That too we will make an end of," said Asmund, "but he shall fare the worse therefor."

Then Grettir said, "Well, let neither make words about it to the other."

So things went on awhile, and Asmund had Keingala killed; and many other scurvy tricks did Grettir in his childhood whereof the story says nought. But he grew great of body,

Of Grettir as a child

though his strength was not well known, for he was unskilled in wrestling; he would make ditties and rhymes, but was somewhat scurrilous therein. He had no will to lie a-night in the fire-hall and was mostly of few words.

CHAPTER XV. OF THE BALL-PLAY ON MIDFIRTH WATER.

AT this time there were many growing up to be men in Midfirth; Skald-Torfa dwelt at Torfa's-stead in those days; her son was called Bessi, he was the shapeliest of men and a good skald.

At Meal lived two brothers, Kormak and Thorgils; with them a man called Odd was fostered, and was called the Foundling-skald.

One called Audun was growing up at Audunstead in Willowdale; he was a kind and good man to deal with, and the strongest in those north parts, of all who were of an age with him. Kalf Asgeirson dwelt at Asgeir's-river, and his brother Thorvald with him. Atli also, Grettir's brother, was growing into a ripe man at that time; the gentlest of men he was, and well beloved of all. Now these men settled to have ball-play together on Midfirth Water; thither came the Midfirthers and Willowdale men; and men from Westhope, and Waterness, and Ramfirth, but those who came from far abode at the play-stead.

Now those who were most even in strength were paired together, and thereat was always the greatest sport in autumntide. But when he was fourteen years old Grettir went to the plays, because he was prayed thereto by his brother Atli.

Now were all paired off for the plays, and Grettir was allotted to play against Audun, the afore-named, who was some winters the eldest of the two; Audun struck the ball over Grettir's head, so that he could not catch it, and it bounded far away along the ice; Grettir got angry thereat, deeming that Audun would outplay him; but he fetches the ball and brings it back, and, when he was within reach of Audun, hurls it right against his forehead, and smites him so that the skin

was broken; then Audun struck at Grettir with the bat he held in his hand, but smote him no hard blow, for Grettir ran in under the stroke; and thereat they seized one another with arms clasped, and wrestled. Then all saw that Grettir was stronger than he had been taken to be, for Audun was a man full of strength. Of the ball-play on Midfirth Water

A long tug they had of it, but the end was that Grettir fell, and Audun thrust his knees against his belly and breast, and dealt hardly with him.

Then Atli and Bessi and many others ran up and parted them; but Grettir said there was no need to hold him like a mad dog, "For," said he, "*thralls wreak themselves at once, dastards never.*"

This men suffered not to grow into open strife, for the brothers, Kalf and Thorvald, were fain that all should be at one again, and Audun and Grettir were somewhat akin withal; so the play went on as before, nor did anything else befall to bring about strife.

CHAPTER XVI. OF THE SLAYING OF SKEGGI.

NOW Thorkel Krafla got very old; he had the rule of Waterdale and was a great man. He was bosom friend of Asmund the Grey-haired, as was beseeming for the sake of their kinship; he was wont to ride to Biarg every year and see his kin there, nor did he fail herein the spring following these matters just told. Asmund and Asdis welcomed him most heartily, he was there three nights, and many things did the kinsmen speak of between them. Now Thorkel asked Asmund what his mind foreboded him about his sons, as to what kind of craft they would be likely to take to. Asmund said that he thought Atli would be a great man at farming, foreseeing, and money-making. Thorkel answered, "A useful man and like unto thyself: but what dost thou say of Grettir?"

Asmund said, "Of him I say, that he will be a strong man and an unruly, and, certes, of wrathful mood, and heavy enough he has been to me."

Of the slaying of Skeggi

Thorkel answered, "That bodes no good, friend; but how shall we settle about our riding to the Thing next summer?"

Asmund answered, "I am growing heavy for wayfaring, and would fain sit at home."

"Wouldst thou that Atli go in thy stead?" said Thorkel.

"I do not see how I could spare him," says Asmund, "because of the farm-work and ingathering of household stores; but now Grettir will not work, yet he bears about that wit with him that I deem he will know how to keep up the showing forth of the law for me through thy aid."

"Well, thou shalt have thy will," said Thorkel, and withal he rode home when he was ready, and Asmund let him go with good gifts.

Some time after this Thorkel made him ready to ride to the Thing; he rode with sixty men, for all went with him who were in his rule: thus he came to Biarg, and therefrom rode Grettir with him.

Now they rode south over the heath that is called Two-days'-ride; but on this mountain the baiting grounds were poor, therefore they rode fast across it down to the settled lands, and when they came down to Fleet-tongue they thought it was time to sleep, so they took the bridles off their horses and let them graze with the saddles on. They lay sleeping till far on in the day, and when they woke, the men went about looking for their horses; but they had gone each his own way, and some of them had been rolling; but Grettir was the last to find his horse.

Now it was the wont in those days that men should carry their own victuals when they rode to the Althing, and most bore meal-bags athwart their saddles; and the saddle was turned under the belly of Grettir's horse, and the mealbag was gone, so he goes and searches, and finds nought.

Just then he sees a man running fast, Grettir asks who it is who is running there; the man answered that his name was Skeggi, and that he was a house-carle from the Ridge in Waterdale. "I am one of the following of goodman Thor-

kel," he says, "but, faring heedlessly, I have lost my meal-bag."

Of the slaying of Skeggi

Grettir said, "*Odd haps are worst haps*, for I, also, have lost the meal-sack which I owned, and now let us search both together."

This Skeggi liked well, and a while they go thus together; but all of a sudden Skeggi bounded off up along the moors and caught up a meal-sack. Grettir saw him stoop, and asked what he took up there.

"My meal-sack," says Skeggi.

"Who speaks to that besides thyself?" says Grettir; "let me see it, for many a thing has its like."

Skeggi said that no man should take from him what was his own; but Grettir caught at the meal-bag, and now they tug one another along with the meal-sack between them, both trying hard to get the best of it.

"It is to be wondered at," says the house-carle, "that ye Waterdale men should deem, that because other men are not as wealthy as ye, that they should not therefore dare to hold aught of their own in your despite."

Grettir said, that it had nought to do with the worth of men that each should have his own.

Skeggi answers, "Too far off is Audun now to throttle thee as at that ball-play."

"Good," said Grettir; "but, howsoever that went, thou at least shalt never throttle me."

Then Skeggi got at his axe and hewed at Grettir; when Grettir saw that, he caught the axe-handle with the left hand blade-ward of Skeggi's hand, so hard that straightway was the axe loosed from his hold. Then Grettir drave that same axe into his head so that it stood in the brain, and the house-carle fell dead to earth. Then Grettir seized the meal-bag and threw it across his saddle, and thereon rode after his fellows.

Now Thorkel rode ahead of all, for he had no misgiving of such things befalling: but men missed Skeggi from the company, and when Grettir came up they asked him what he knew of Skeggi; then he sang:

Of the slaying of Skeggi

"A rock-troll her weight did throw
At Skeggi's throat a while ago;
Over the battle-ogress ran
The red blood of the serving-man;
Her deadly iron mouth did gape
Above him, till clean out of shape
She tore his head and let out life:
And certainly I saw their strife."

Then Thorkel's men sprung up and said that surely trolls had not taken the man in broad daylight. Thorkel grew silent, but said presently, "The matter is likely to be quite other than this; methinks Grettir has in all likelihood killed him, or what could befall?"

Then Grettir told all their strife. Thorkel says, "This has come to pass most unluckily, for Skeggi was given to my following, and was, nathless, a man of good kin; but I shall deal thus with the matter: I shall give boot for the man as the doom goes, but the outlawry I may not settle. Now, two things thou hast to choose between, Grettir; whether thou wilt rather go to the Thing and risk the turn of matters, or go back home."

Grettir chose to go to the Thing, and thither he went. But a law-suit was set on foot by the heirs of the slain man: Thorkel gave handsel, and paid up all fines, but Grettir must needs be outlawed, and keep abroad three winters.

Now when the chiefs rode from the Thing, they baited under Sledgehill before they parted: then Grettir lifted a stone which now lies there in the grass and is called Grettir's-heave; but many men came up to see the stone, and found it a great wonder that so young a man should heave aloft such a huge rock.

Now Grettir rode home to Biarg and tells the tale of his journey; Asmund let out little thereon, but said that he would turn out an unruly man.

CHAPTER XVII. OF GRETTIR'S VOYAGE OUT.

Grettir's voyage out

THERE was a man called Haflidi, who dwelt at Reydarfell in Whiteriverside, he was a seafaring man and had a sailing ship, which lay up Whiteriver: there was a man on board his ship, hight Bard, who had a wife with him young and fair. Asmund sent a man to Haflidi, praying him to take Grettir and look after him; Haflidi said that he had heard that the man was ill ruled of mood; yet for the sake of the friendship between him and Asmund he took Grettir to himself, and made ready for sailing abroad.

Asmund would give to his son no faring-goods but victuals for the voyage and a little wadmall. Grettir prayed him for some weapon, but Asmund answered, "Thou hast not been obedient to me, nor do I know how far thou art likely to work with weapons things that may be of any gain; and no weapon shalt thou have of me."

"*No deed, no reward*," says Grettir. Then father and son parted with little love. Many there were who bade Grettir farewell, but few bade him come back.

But his mother brought him on his road, and before they parted she spoke thus, "Thou art not fitted out from home, son, as I fain would thou wert, a man so well born as thou; but, meseems, the greatest shortcoming herein is that thou hast no weapons of any avail, and my mind misgives me that thou wilt perchance need them sorely."

With that she took out from under her cloak a sword well wrought, and a fair thing it was, and then she said, "This sword was owned by Jokul, my father's father, and the earlier Waterdale men, and it gained them many a day; now I give thee the sword, and may it stand thee in good stead."

Grettir thanked her well for this gift, and said he deemed it better than things of more worth; then he went on his way, and Asdis wished him all good hap.

Now Grettir rode south over the heath, and made no stay till he came to the ship. Haflidi gave him a good welcome and asked him for his faring-goods, then Grettir sang:

Grettir's voyage out

"Rider of wind-driven steed,
Little gat I to my need,
When I left my fair birth-stead,
From the snatchers of worm's bed;
But this man's-bane hanging here,
Gift of woman good of cheer,
Proves the old saw said not ill:
Best to bairn is mother still."

Haflidi said it was easily seen that she thought the most of him. But now they put to sea when they were ready, and had wind at will; but when they had got out over all shallows they hoisted sail.

Now Grettir made a den for himself under the boat, from whence he would move for nought, neither for baling, nor to do aught at the sail, nor to work at what he was bound to work at in the ship in even shares with the other men, neither would he buy himself off from the work.

Now they sailed south by Reekness and then south from the land; and when they lost land they got much heavy sea; the ship was somewhat leaky, and scarce seaworthy in heavy weather, therefore they had it wet enough. Now Grettir let fly his biting rhymes, whereat the men got sore wroth. One day, when it so happened that the weather was both squally and cold, the men called out to Grettir, and bade him now do manfully, "For," said they, "now our claws grow right cold." Grettir looked up and said:

"Good luck, scurvy starvelings, if I should behold
Each finger ye have doubled up with the cold."

And no work they got out of him, and now it misliked them of their lot as much again as before, and they said that he should pay with his skin for his rhymes and the lawlessness which he did. "Thou art more fain," said they, "of playing with Bard the mate's wife than doing thy duty on board ship, and this is a thing not to be borne at all."

The gale grew greater steadily, and now they stood baling

for days and nights together, and all swore to kill Grettir. But when Haflidi heard this, he went up to where Grettir lay, and said, "Methinks the bargain between thee and the chapmen is scarcely fair; first thou dost by them unlawfully, and thereafter thou castest thy rhymes at them; and now they swear that they will throw thee overboard, and this is unseemly work to go on." Grettir's voyage out

"Why should they not be free to do as they will?" says Grettir; "but I well would that one or two of them tarry here behind with me, or ever I go overboard."

Haflidi says, "Such deeds are not to be done, and we shall never thrive if ye rush into such madness; but I shall give thee good rede."

"What is that?" says Grettir.

"They blame thee for singing ill things of them; now, therefore, I would that thou sing some scurvy rhyme to me, for then it might be that they would bear with thee the easier."

"To thee I never sing but good," says Grettir: "I am not going to make thee like these starvelings."

"One may sing so," says Haflidi, "that the lampoon be not so foul when it is searched into, though at first sight it be not over fair."

"I have ever plenty of that skill in me," says Grettir.

Then Haflidi went to the men where they were baling, and said, "Great is your toil, and no wonder that ye have taken ill liking to Grettir."

"But his lampoons we deem worse than all the rest together," they said.

Haflidi said in a loud voice, "He will surely fare ill for it in the end."

But when Grettir heard Haflidi speak blamefully of him, he sang:

"Otherwise would matters be,
When this shouting Haflidi
Ate in house at Reydarfell
Curdled milk, and deemed it well;

Grettir's voyage out

He who decks the reindeer's side
That 'twixt ness and ness doth glide,
Twice in one day had his fill
Of the feast of dart shower shrill."[1]

The shipmen thought this foul enough, and said he should not put shame on Skipper Haflidi for nought.

Then said Haflidi, "Grettir is plentifully worthy that ye should do him some shame, but I will not have my honour staked against his ill-will and recklessness; nor is it good for us to wreak vengeance for this forthwith while we have this danger hanging over us; but be ye mindful of it when ye land, if so it seem good to you."

"Well," they said, "why should we not fare even as thou farest? for why should this vile word bite us more than thee?"

And in that mind Haflidi bade them abide; and thenceforward the chapmen made far less noise about Grettir's rhymes than before.

Now a long and a hard voyage they had, and the leak gained on the ship, and men began to be exceeding worn with toil. The young wife of the mate was wont to sew from Grettir's hands, and much would the crew mock him therefor; but Haflidi went up to where Grettir lay and sang:

"Grettir, stand up from thy grave,
In the trough of the grey wave
The keel labours, tell my say
Now unto thy merry may;
From thy hands the linen-clad
Fill of sewing now has had,
Till we make the land will she
Deem that labour fitteth thee."

Then Grettir stood up and sang:

"Stand we up, for neath us now
Rides the black ship high enow;

[1] This is about as obscure as the original, which seems to allude to some event not mentioned in the Saga.

This fair wife will like it ill
If my limbs are laid here still;
Certes, the white trothful one
Will not deem the deed well done,
If the work that I should share
Other folk must ever bear."

Grettir's voyage out

Then he ran aft to where they were baling, and asked what they would he should do; they said he would do mighty little good.

"Well," said he, "*ye may yet be apaid of a man's aid.*"

Haflidi bade them not set aside his help, "For it may be he shall deem his hands freed if he offers his aid."

At that time pumping was not used in ships that fared over the main; the manner of baling they used men called tub or cask baling, and a wet work it was and a wearisome; two balers were used, and one went down while the other came up. Now the chapmen bade Grettir have the job of sinking the balers, and said that now it should be tried what he could do; he said that the less it was tried the better it would be. But he goes down and sinks the balers, and now two were got to bale against him; they held out but a little while before they were overcome with weariness; and then four came forward and soon fared in likewise, and, so say some, that eight baled against him before the baling was done and the ship was made dry. Thenceforth the manner of the chapmen's words to Grettir was much changed, for they saw what strength he had to fall back upon; and from that time he was the stoutest and readiest to help, wheresoever need was.

Now they bore off east into the main, and much thick weather they had, and one night unawares they ran suddenly on a rock, so that the nether part of the ship went from under her; then the boat was run down, and women and all the loose goods were brought off: nearby was a little holm whither they brought their matters as they best could in the night; but when it began to dawn they had a talk as to where they were come; then they who had fared between lands before

Grettir at Haramsey

knew the land for Southmere in Norway; there was an island hard by called Haramsey; many folk dwelt there, and therein too was the manor of a lord.

CHAPTER XVIII. OF GRETTIR AT HARAMSEY AND HIS DEALINGS WITH KARR THE OLD.

NOW the lord who dwelt in the island was called Thorfinn; he was the son of Karr the Old, who had dwelt there long; and Thorfinn was a great chief.

But when day was fully come men saw from the island that the chapmen were brought to great straits. This was made known to Thorfinn, and he quickly bestirred himself, and had a large bark of his launched, rowed by sixteen men, on this bark were nigh thirty men in all; they came up speedily and saved the chapmen's wares; but the ship settled down, and much goods were lost there. Thorfinn brought all men from the ship home to himself, and they abode there a week and dried their wares. Then the chapmen went south into the land, and are now out of the tale.

Grettir was left behind with Thorfinn, and little he stirred, and was at most times mighty short of speech. Thorfinn bade give him meals, but otherwise paid small heed to him; Grettir was loth to follow him, and would not go out with him in the day; this Thorfinn took ill, but had not the heart to have food withheld from him.

Now Thorfinn was fond of stately housekeeping, and was a man of great joyance, and would fain have other men merry too: but Grettir would walk about from house to house, and often went into other farms about the island.

There was a man called Audun who dwelt at Windham; thither Grettir went every day, and he made friends with Audun, and there he was wont to sit till far on in the day. Now one night very late, as Grettir made ready to go home, he saw a great fire burst out on a ness to the north of Audun's farm. Grettir asked what new thing this might be. Audun said that he need be in no haste to know that.

"It would be said," quoth Grettir, "if that were seen in our land, that the flame burned above hid treasure." Grettir at Haramsey

The farmer said, "That fire I deem to be ruled over by one into whose matters it avails little to pry."

"Yet fain would I know thereof," said Grettir.

"On that ness," said Audun, "stands a barrow, great and strong, wherein was laid Karr the Old, Thorfinn's father; at first father and son had but one farm in the island; but since Karr died he has so haunted this place that he has swept away all farmers who owned lands here, so that now Thorfinn holds the whole island; but whatsoever man Thorfinn holds his hands over, gets no scathe."

Grettir said that he had told his tale well: "And," says he, "I shall come here to-morrow, and then thou shalt have digging-tools ready."

"Now, I pray thee," says Audun, "to do nought herein, for I know that Thorfinn will cast his hatred on thee therefor."

Grettir said he would risk that.

So the night went by, and Grettir came early on the morrow and the digging-tools were ready; the farmer goes with him to the barrow, and Grettir brake it open, and was rough-handed enough thereat, and did not leave off till he came to the rafters, and by then the day was spent; then he tore away the rafters, and now Audun prayed him hard not to go into the barrow; Grettir bade him guard the rope, "but I shall espy what dwells within here."

Then Grettir entered into the barrow, and right dark it was, and a smell there was therein none of the sweetest. Now he groped about to see how things were below; first he found horse-bones, and then he stumbled against the arm of a high-chair, and in that chair found a man sitting; great treasures of gold and silver were heaped together there, and a small chest was set under the feet of him full of silver; all these riches Grettir carried together to the rope; but as he went out through the barrow he was griped at right strongly;

Grettir at Haramsey

thereon he let go the treasure and rushed against the barrow-dweller, and now they set on one another unsparingly enough.

Everything in their way was kicked out of place, the barrow-wight setting on with hideous eagerness; Grettir gave back before him for a long time, till at last it came to this, that he saw it would not do to hoard his strength any more: now neither spared the other, and they were brought to where the horse-bones were, and thereabout they wrestled long. And now one, now the other, fell on his knee; but the end of the strife was, that the barrow-dweller fell over on his back with huge din. Then ran Audun from the holding of the rope, and deemed Grettir dead. But Grettir drew the sword, "Jokul's gift," and drave it at the neck of the barrow-bider so that it took off his head, and Grettir laid it at the thigh of him.[1] Then he went to the rope with the treasure, and lo, Audun was clean gone, so he had to get up the rope by his hands; he had tied a line to the treasure, and therewith he now haled it up.

Grettir had got very stiff with his dealings with Karr, and now he went back to Thorfinn's house with the treasures, whenas all folk had set them down to table. Thorfinn gave Grettir a sharp look when he came into the drinking-hall, and asked him what work he had on hand so needful to do that he might not keep times of meals with other men. Grettir answers, "Many little matters will hap on late eves," and therewith he cast down on the table all the treasure he had taken in the barrow; but one matter there was thereof, on which he must needs keep his eyes; this was a short-sword, so good a weapon, that a better, he said, he had never seen; and this he gave up the last of all. Thorfinn was blithe to see that sword, for it was an heirloom of his house, and had never yet gone out of his kin.

"Whence came these treasures to thine hand?" said Thorfinn.

Grettir sang:

"Lessener of the flame of sea,
My strong hope was true to me,

[1] The old belief was that by this means only could a ghost be laid. See p. 90.

When I deemed that treasure lay
In the barrow; from to-day
Folk shall know that I was right;
The begetters of the fight
Small joy now shall have therein,
Seeking dragon's-lair to win."

Grettir at Haramsey

Thorfinn answered, "Blood will seldom seem blood to thine eyes; no man before thee has had will to break open the barrow; but, because I know that what wealth soever is hid in earth or borne into barrow is wrongly placed, I shall not hold thee blameworthy for thy deed as thou hast brought it all to me; yea, or whence didst thou get the good sword?"

Grettir answered and sang:

"Lessener of waves flashing flame,
To my lucky hand this came
In the barrow where that thing
Through the dark fell clattering;
If that helm-fire I should gain,
Made so fair to be the bane
Of the breakers of the bow,
Ne'er from my hand should it go."

Thorfinn said, "Well hast thou prayed for it, but thou must show some deed of fame before I give thee that sword, for never could I get it of my father while he lived."

Said Grettir, "Who knows to whom most gain will come of it in the end?"

So Thorfinn took the treasures and kept the sword at his bed-head, and the winter wore on toward Yule, so that little else fell out to be told of.

Of Yule at Haramsey

CHAPTER XIX. OF YULE AT HARAMSEY, AND HOW GRETTIR DEALT WITH THE BEARSERKS.

NOW the summer before these things, Earl Eric Hakonson made ready to go from his land west to England, to see King Knut the Mighty, his brother-in-law, but left behind him in the rule of Norway Hakon, his son, and gave him into the hands of Earl Svein, his brother, for the watching and warding of his realm, for Hakon was a child in years.

But before Earl Eric went away from the land, he called together lords and rich bonders, and many things they spoke on laws and the rule of the land, for Earl Eric was a man good at rule. Now men thought it an exceeding ill fashion in the land that runagates or bearserks called to holm high-born men for their fee or womankind, in such wise, that whosoever should fall before the other should lie unatoned; hereof many got both shame and loss of goods, and some lost their lives withal; and therefore Earl Eric did away with all holmgangs and outlawed all bearserks who fared with raids and riots.

In the making of this law, the chief of all, with Earl Eric, was Thorfinn Karrson, from Haramsey, for he was a wise man, and a dear friend of the Earl's.

Two brothers are named as being of the worst in these matters, one hight Thorir Paunch, the other Ogmund the Evil; they were of Halogaland kin, bigger and stronger than other men. They wrought the bearserks'-gang and spared nothing in their fury; they would take away the wives of men and hold them for a week or a half-month, and then bring them back to their husbands; they robbed wheresoever they came, or did some other ill deeds. Now Earl Eric made them outlaws through the length and breadth of Norway, and Thorfinn was the eagerest of men in bringing about their outlawry, therefore they deemed that they owed him ill-will enow.

So the Earl went away from the land, as is said in his Saga;

but Earl Svein bore sway over Norway. Thorfinn went home to his house, and sat at home till just up to Yule, as is aforesaid; but at Yule he made ready to go to his farm called Slysfirth, which is on the mainland, and thither he had bidden many of his friends. Thorfinn's wife could not go with her husband, for her daughter of ripe years lay ill a-bed, so they both abode at home. Grettir was at home too, and eight housecarles. Now Thorfinn went with thirty freedmen to the Yule-feast, whereat there was the greatest mirth and joyance among men. Of Yule at Haramsey

Now Yule-eve comes on, and the weather was bright and calm; Grettir was mostly abroad this day, and saw how ships fared north and south along the land, for each one sought the other's home where the Yule drinking was settled to come off. By this time the goodman's daughter was so much better that she could walk about with her mother, and thus the day wore on.

Now Grettir sees how a ship rows up toward the island; it was not right big, but shield-hung it was from stem to stern, and stained all above the sea: these folk rowed smartly, and made for the boat-stands of goodman Thorfinn, and when the keel took land, those who were therein sprang overboard. Grettir cast up the number of the men, and they were twelve altogether; he deemed their guise to be far from peaceful. They took up their ship and bore it up from the sea; thereafter they ran up to the boat-stand, and therein was that big boat of Thorfinn, which was never launched to sea by less than thirty men, but these twelve shot it in one haul down to the shingle of the foreshore; and thereon they took up their own bark and bore it into the boat-stand.

Now Grettir thought that he could see clear enough that they would make themselves at home. But he goes down to meet them, and welcomes them merrily, and asks who they were and what their leader was hight; he to whom these words were spoken answered quickly, and said that his name was Thorir, and that he was called Paunch, and that his brother was Ogmund, and that the others were fellows of theirs.

Of Yule at Haramsey

"I deem," said Thorir, "that thy master Thorfinn has heard tell of us; is he perchance at home?"

Grettir answered, "Lucky men are ye, and hither have come in a good hour, if ye are the men I take you to be; the goodman is gone away with all his home-folk who are freemen, and will not be home again till after Yule; but the mistress is at home, and so is the goodman's daughter; and if I thought that I had some ill-will to pay back, I should have chosen above all things to have come just thus; for here are all matters in plenty whereof ye stand in need, both beer, and all other good things."

Thorir held his peace, while Grettir let this tale run on, then he said to Ogmund,

"How far have things come to pass other than as I guessed? and now am I well enough minded to take revenge on Thorfinn for having made us outlaws; and this man is ready enough of tidings, and no need have we to drag the words out of him."

"Words all may use freely," said Grettir, "and I shall give you such cheer as I may; and now come home with me."

They bade him have thanks therefor, and said they would take his offer.

But when they came home to the farm, Grettir took Thorir by the hand and led him into the hall; and now was Grettir mightily full of words. The mistress was in the hall, and had had it decked with hangings, and made all fair and seemly; but when she heard Grettir's talk, she stood still on the floor, and asked whom he welcomed in that earnest wise.

He answered, "Now, mistress, is it right meet to welcome these guests merrily, for here is come goodman Thorir Paunch and the whole twelve of them, and are minded to sit here Yule over, and a right good hap it is, for we were few enough before."

She answered, "Am I to number these among bonders and goodmen, who are the worst of robbers and ill-doers? a large share of my goods had I given that they had not come here as at this time; and ill dost thou reward Thorfinn, for that he took thee a needy man from shipwreck and has held thee through the winter as a free man."

Grettir said, "It would be better to take the wet clothes off these guests than to scold at me; since for that thou mayst have time long enough." Of Yule at Haramsey

Then said Thorir, "Be not cross-grained, mistress; nought shalt thou miss thy husband's being away, for a man shall be got in his place for thee, yea, and for thy daughter a man, and for each of the home-women."

"That is spoken like a man," said Grettir, "nor will they thus have any cause to bewail their lot."

Now all the women rushed forth from the hall smitten with huge dread and weeping; then said Grettir to the bearserks, "Give into my hands what it pleases you to lay aside of weapons and wet clothes, for the folk will not be yieldin to us while they are scared."

Thorir said he heeded not how women might squeal; "But," said he, "thee indeed we may set apart from the other home-folk, and methinks we may well make thee our man of trust."

"See to that yourselves," said Grettir, "but certes I do not take to all men alike."

Thereupon they laid aside the more part of their weapons, and thereafter Grettir said,

"Methinks it is a good rede now that ye sit down to table and drink somewhat, for it is right likely that ye are thirsty after the rowing."

They said they were ready enough for that, but knew not where to find out the cellar; Grettir asked if they would that he should see for things and go about for them. The bearserks said they would be right fain of that; so Grettir fetched beer and gave them to drink; they were mightily weary, and drank in huge draughts, and still he let them have the strongest beer that there was, and this went on for a long time, and meanwhile he told them many merry tales. From all this there was din enough to be heard among them, and the home-folk were nowise fain to come to them.

Now Thorir said, "Never yet did I meet a man unknown to me, who would do us such good deeds as this man; now, what reward wilt thou take of us for thy work?"

Grettir answered, "As yet I look to no reward for this; but if we be even such friends when ye go away, as it looks like we shall be, I am minded to join fellowship with you; and though I be of less might than some of you, yet shall I not let any man of big redes."

Hereat they were well pleased, and would settle the fellowship with vows.

Grettir said that this they should not do, "For true is the old saw, *Ale is another man*, nor shall ye settle this in haste any further than as I have said, for on both sides are we men little meet to rule our tempers."

They said that they would not undo what they had said.

Withal the evening wore on till it grew quite dark; then sees Grettir that they were getting very heavy with drink, so he said,

"Do ye not find it time to go to sleep?"

Thorir said, "Time enough forsooth, and sure shall I be to keep to what I have promised the mistress."

Then Grettir went forth from the hall, and cried out loudly,

"Go ye to your beds, women all, for so is goodman Thorir pleased to bid."

They cursed him for this, and to hear them was like hearkening to the noise of many wolves. Now the bearserks came forth from the hall, and Grettir said,

"Let us go out, and I will show you Thorfinn's cloth bower."

They were willing to be led there; so they came to an outbower exceeding great; a door there was to it, and a strong lock thereon, and the store-house was very strong withal; there too was a closet good and great, and a shield-panelling between the chambers; both chambers stood high, and men went up by steps to them. Now the bearserks got riotous and pushed Grettir about, and he kept tumbling away from them, and when they least thought thereof, he slipped quickly out of the bower, seized the latch, slammed the door to, and put the bolt on. Thorir and his fellows thought at first that the door must have got locked of itself, and paid no heed there-

to; they had light with them, for Grettir had showed them many choice things which Thorfinn owned, and these they now noted awhile. Meantime Grettir made all speed home to the farm, and when he came in at the door he called out loudly, and asked where the goodwife was; she held her peace, for she did not dare to answer. Of Yule at Haramsey

He said, "Here is somewhat of a chance of a good catch; but are there any weapons of avail here?"

She answers, "Weapons there are, but how they may avail thee I know not."

"Let us talk thereof anon," says he, "but now let every man do his best, for later on no better chance shall there be."

The goodwife said, "Now God were in garth if our lot might better: over Thorfinn's bed hangs the barbed spear, the big one that was owned by Karr the Old; there, too, is a helmet and a byrni, and the short-sword, the good one; and the arms will not fail if thine heart does well."

Grettir seizes the helmet and spear, girds himself with the short-sword, and rushed out swiftly; and the mistress called upon the house-carles, bidding them follow such a dauntless man; four of them rushed forth and seized their weapons, but the other four durst come nowhere nigh. Now it is to be said of the bearserks that they thought Grettir delayed his coming back strangely; and now they began to doubt if there were not some guile in the matter. They rushed against the door and found it was locked, and now they try the timber walls so that every beam creaked again; at last they brought things so far that they broke down the shield-panelling, got into the passage, and thence out to the steps. Now bearserks' gang seized them, and they howled like dogs. In that very nick of time Grettir came up and with both hands thrust his spear at the midst of Thorir, as he was about to get down the steps, so that it went through him at once. Now the spear-head was both long and broad, and Ogmund the Evil ran on to Thorir and pushed him on to Grettir's thrust, so that all went up to the barb-ends; then the spear stood out through Thorir's back and into Ogmund's breast, and they both

tumbled dead off the spear; then of the others each rushed down the steps as he came forth; Grettir set on each one of them, and in turn hewed with the sword, or thrust with the spear; but they defended themselves with logs that lay on the green, and whatso thing they could lay hands on, therefore the greatest danger it was to deal with them, because of their strength, even though they were weaponless.

Two of the Halogalanders Grettir slew on the green, and then came up the house-carles; they could not come to one mind as to what weapons each should have; now they set on whenever the bearserks gave back, but when they turned about on them, then the house-carles slunk away up to the houses. Six vikings fell there, and of all of them was Grettir the bane. Then the six others got off and came down to the boat-stand, and so into it, and thence they defended themselves with oars. Grettir now got great blows from them, so that at all times he ran the risk of much hurt; but the house-carles went home, and had much to say of their stout onset; the mistress bade them espy what became of Grettir, but this was not to be got out of them. Two more of the bearserks Grettir slew in the boat-stand, but four slipped out by him; and by this, dark night had come on; two of them ran into a corn-barn at the farm of Windham, which is aforenamed: here they fought for a long time, but at last Grettir killed them both; then was he beyond measure weary and stiff, the night was far gone, and the weather got very cold with the drift of the snow. He was fain to leave the search of the two vikings who were left now, so he walked home to the farm. The mistress had lights lighted in the highest lofts at the windows that they might guide him on his way; and so it was that he found his road home whereas he saw the light.

But when he was come into the door, the mistress went up to him, and bade him welcome.

"Now," she said, "thou hast reaped great glory, and freed me and my house from a shame of which we should never have been healed, but if thou hadst saved us."

Grettir answered, "Methinks I am much the same as I was this evening, when thou didst cast ill words on me."

The mistress answered, "We wotted not that thou wert a man of such prowess as we have now proved thee; now shall all things in the house be at thy will which I may bestow on thee, and which it may be seeming for thee to take; but methinks that Thorfinn will reward thee better still when he comes home." Of Yule at Haramsey

Grettir answered, "Little of reward will be needed now, but I keep thine offer till the coming of the master; and I have some hope now that ye will sleep in peace as for the bearserks."

Grettir drank little that evening, and lay with his weapons about him through the night. In the morning, when it began to dawn, people were summoned together throughout the island, and a search was set on foot for the bearserks who had escaped the night before; they were found far on in the day under a rock, and were by then dead from cold and wounds; then they were brought unto a tide-washed heap of stones and buried thereunder.

After that folk went home, and the men of that island deemed themselves brought unto fair peace.

Now when Grettir came back to the mistress, he sang this stave:

"By the sea's wash have we made
Graves, where twelve spear-groves are laid;
I alone such speedy end,
Unto all these folk did send.
O fair giver forth of gold,
Whereof can great words be told,
'Midst the deeds one man has wrought,
If this deed should come to nought?"

The goodwife said, "Surely thou art like unto very few men who are now living on the earth."

So she set him in the high seat, and all things she did well to him, and now time wore on till Thorfinn's coming home was looked for.

Thorfinn meets Grettir again

CHAPTER XX. HOW THORFINN MET GRETTIR AT HARAMSEY AGAIN.

AFTER Yule Thorfinn made ready for coming home, and he let those folk go with good gifts whom he had bidden to his feast. Now he fares with his following till he comes hard by his boat-stands; they saw a ship lying on the strand, and soon knew it for Thorfinn's bark, the big one. Now Thorfinn had as yet no news of the vikings, he bade his men hasten landward, "For I fear," said he, "that friends have not been at work here."

Thorfinn was the first to step ashore before his men, and forthwith he went up to the boat-stand; he saw a keel standing there, and knew it for the bearserks' ship. Then he said to his men, "My mind misgives me much that here things have come to pass, even such as I would have given the whole island, yea, every whit of what I have herein, that they might never have happed."

They asked why he spake thus. Then he said, "Here have come the vikings, whom I know to be the worst of all Norway, Thorir Paunch and Ogmund the Evil; in good sooth they will hardly have kept house happily for us, and in an Icelander I have but little trust."

Withal he spoke many things hereabout to his fellows.

Now Grettir was at home, and so brought it about, that folk were slow to go down to the shore; and said he did not care much if the goodman Thorfinn had somewhat of a shake at what he saw before him; but when the mistress asked him leave to go, he said she should have her will as to where she went, but that he himself should stir nowhither. She ran swiftly to meet Thorfinn, and welcomed him cheerily. He was glad thereof, and said, "Praise be to God that I see thee whole and merry, and my daughter in likewise. But how have ye fared since I went from home?"

She answered, "Things have turned out well, but we were near being overtaken by such a shame as we should never have had healing of, if thy winter-guest had not holpen us."

Then Thorfinn spake, "Now shall we sit down, but do thou tell us these tidings." Thorfinn meets

Then she told all things plainly even as they had come to pass, and praised greatly Grettir's stoutness and great daring; meanwhile Thorfinn held his peace, but when she had made an end of her tale, he said, "How true is the saw, *Long it takes to try a man*. But where is Grettir now?" Grettir again

The goodwife said, "He is at home in the hall."

Thereupon they went home to the farm.

Thorfinn went up to Grettir and kissed him, and thanked him with many fair words for the great heart which he had shown to him; "And I will say to thee what few say to their friends, that I would thou shouldst be in need of men, that then thou mightest know if I were to thee in a man's stead or not; but for thy good deed I can never reward thee unless thou comest to be in some troublous need; but as to thy abiding with me, that shall ever stand open to thee when thou willest it; and thou shalt be held the first of all my men."

Grettir bade him have much thank therefor. "And," quoth he, "this should I have taken even if thou hadst made me proffer thereof before."

Now Grettir sat there the winter over, and was in the closest friendship with Thorfinn; and for this deed he was now well renowned all over Norway, and there the most, where the bearserks had erst wrought the greatest ill deeds.

This spring Thorfinn asked Grettir what he was about to busy himself with: he said he would go north to Vogar while the fair was. Thorfinn said there was ready for him money as much as he would. Grettir said that he needed no more money at that time than faring-silver: this, Thorfinn said, was full-well due to him, and thereupon went with him to ship.

Now he gave him the short-sword, the good one, which Grettir bore as long as he lived, and the choicest of choice things it was. Withal Thorfinn bade Grettir come to him whenever he might need aid.

But Grettir went north to Vogar, and a many folk were

Thorfinn meets Grettir again

there; many men welcomed him there right heartily who had not seen him before, for the sake of that great deed of prowess which he had done when he slew the vikings; many high-born men prayed him to come and abide with them, but he would fain go back to his friend Thorfinn. Now he took ship in a bark that was owned of a man hight Thorkel, who dwelt in Salft in Halogaland, and was a high-born man. But when Grettir came to Thorkel he welcomed him right heartily, and bade Grettir abide with him that winter, and laid many words thereto.

This offer Grettir took, and was with Thorkel that winter in great joyance and fame.

CHAPTER XXI. OF GRETTIR AND BIORN AND THE BEAR.

THERE was a man, hight Biorn, who was dwelling with Thorkel; he was a man of rash temper, of good birth, and somewhat akin to Thorkel; he was not well loved of men, for he would slander much those who were with Thorkel, and in this wise he sent many away. Grettir and he had little to do together; Biorn thought him of little worth weighed against himself, but Grettir was unyielding, so that things fell athwart between them. Biorn was a mightily boisterous man, and made himself very big; many young men gat into fellowship with him in these things, and would stray abroad by night. Now it befell, that early in winter a savage bear ran abroad from his winter lair, and got so grim that he spared neither man nor beast. Men thought he had been roused by the noise that Biorn and his fellows had made. The brute got so hard to deal with that he tore down the herds of men, and Thorkel had the greatest hurt thereof, for he was the richest man in the neighbourhood.

Now one day Thorkel bade his men to follow him, and search for the lair of the bear. They found it in sheer sea-rocks; there was a high rock and a cave before it down below, but only one track to go up to it; under the cave were scarped rocks, and a heap of stones down by the sea, and sure death it was to

all who might fall down there. The bear lay in his lair by day, but went abroad as soon as night fell; no fold could keep sheep safe from him, nor could any dogs be set on him: and all this men thought the heaviest trouble. Biorn, Thorkel's kinsman, said that the greatest part had been done, as the lair had been found. "And now I shall try," said he, "what sort of play we[1] namesakes shall have together." Grettir made as if he knew not what Biorn said on this matter. Of Grettir and Biorn and the bear

Now it happened always when men went to sleep a-nights that Biorn disappeared: and one night when Biorn went to the lair he was aware that the beast was there before him, and roaring savagely. Biorn lay down in the track, and had over him his shield, and was going to wait till the beast should stir abroad as his manner was. Now the bear had an inkling of the man, and got somewhat slow to move off. Biorn waxed very sleepy where he lay, and cannot wake up, and just at this time the beast betakes himself from his lair; now he sees where the man lies, and, hooking at him with his claw, he tears from him the shield and throws it down over the rocks. Biorn started up suddenly awake, takes to his legs and runs home, and it was a near thing that the beast gat him not. This his fellows knew, for they had spies about Biorn's ways; in the morning they found the shield, and made the greatest jeering at all this.

At Yule Thorkel went himself, and eight of them altogether, and there was Grettir and Biorn and other followers of Thorkel. Grettir had on a fur-cloak, which he laid aside while they set on the beast. It was awkward for an onslaught there, for thereat could folk come but by spear-thrusts, and all the spear-points the bear turned off him with his teeth. Now Biorn urged them on much to the onset, yet he himself went not so nigh as to run the risk of any hurt. Amid this, when men looked least for it, Biorn suddenly seized Grettir's coat, and cast it into the beast's lair. Now nought they could wreak on him, and had to go back when the day was far spent. But when Grettir was going, he misses his coat, and he could

[1] Biorn is Icelandic for bear.

Of Grettir and Biorn and the bear

see that the bear has it cast under him. Then he said, "What man of you has wrought the jest of throwing my coat into the lair?"

Biorn says, "He who is like to dare to own to it."

Grettir answers, "I set no great store on such matters."

Now they went on their way home, and when they had walked awhile, the thong of Grettir's leggings brake. Thorkel bid them wait for him; but Grettir said there was no need of that. Then said Biorn, "Ye need not think that Grettir will run away from his coat; he will have the honour all to himself, and will slay that beast all alone, wherefrom we have gone back all eight of us; thus would he be such as he is said to be; but sluggishly enow has he fared forth to-day."

"I know not," said Thorkel, "how thou wilt fare in the end, but men of equal prowess I deem you not: lay as few burdens on him as thou mayst, Biorn."

Biorn said, that neither of them should pick and choose words from out his mouth.

Now, when a hill's brow was between them, Grettir went back to the pass, for now there was no striving with others for the onset. He drew the sword, Jokul's gift, but had a loop over the handle of the short-sword, and slipped it up over his hand, and this he did in that he thought he could easier have it at his will if his hand were loose. He went up into the pass forthwith, and when the beast saw a man, it rushed against Grettir exceeding fiercely, and smote at him with that paw which was furthest off from the rock; Grettir hewed against the blow with the sword, and therewith smote the paw above the claws, and took it off; then the beast was fain to smite at Grettir with the paw that was whole, and dropped down therewith on to the docked one, but it was shorter than he wotted of, and withal he tumbled into Grettir's arms. Now he griped at the beast between the ears and held him off, so that he got not at him to bite. And so Grettir himself says that herein he deemed he had had the hardest trial of his strength, thus to hold the brute. But now as it struggled fiercely, and the space was narrow, they both tumbled down over the rock;

the beast was the heaviest of the two, and came down first upon the stone heap below, Grettir being the uppermost, and the beast was much mangled on its nether side. Now Grettir seized the short-sword and thrust it into the heart of the bear, and that was his bane. Thereafter he went home, taking with him his cloak all tattered, and withal what he had cut from the paw of the bear. Thorkel sat a-drinking when he came into the hall, and much men laughed at the rags of the cloak Grettir had cast over him. Now he threw on to the table what he had chopped off the paw. Of Grettir and Biorn and the bear

Then said Thorkel, "Where is now Biorn my kinsman? never did I see thy irons bite the like of this, Biorn, and my will it is, that thou make Grettir a seemly offer for this shame thou hast wrought on him."

Biorn said that was like to be long about, "and never shall I care whether he likes it well or ill."

Then Grettir sang:

"Oft that war-god came to hall
Frighted, when no blood did fall,
In the dusk; who ever cried
On the bear last autumn-tide;
No man saw me sitting there
Late at eve before the lair;
Yet the shaggy one to-day
From his den I drew away."

"Sure enough," said Biorn, "thou hast fared forth well to-day, and two tales thou tellest of us twain therefor; and well I know that thou hast had a good hit at me."

Thorkel said, "I would, Grettir, that thou wouldst not avenge thee on Biorn, but for him I will give a full man-gild if thereby ye may be friends."

Biorn said he might well turn his money to better account, than to boot for this; "And, methinks it is wisest that in my dealings with Grettir *one oak should have what from the other it shaves*."

Grettir said that he should like that very well. But Thorkel

Of Grettir and Biorn and the bear

said, "Yet I hope, Grettir, that thou wilt do this for my sake, not to do aught against Biorn while ye are with me."

"That shall be," said Grettir.

Biorn said he would walk fearless of Grettir wheresoever they might meet.

Grettir smiled mockingly, but would not take boot for Biorn. So they were there that winter through.

CHAPTER XXII. OF THE SLAYING OF BIORN.

IN the spring Grettir went north to Vogar with chapmen. He and Thorkel parted in friendship; but Biorn went west to England, and was the master of Thorkel's ship that went thither. Biorn dwelt thereabout that summer and bought such things for Thorkel as he had given him word to get; but as the autumn wore on he sailed from the west. Grettir was at Vogar till the fleet broke up; then he sailed from the north with some chapmen until they came to a harbour at an island before the mouth of Drontheim-firth, called Gartar, where they pitched their tents. Now when they were housed, a ship came sailing havenward from the south along the land; they soon saw that it was an England farer; she took the strand further out, and her crew went ashore; Grettir and his fellows went to meet them. But when they met, Grettir saw that Biorn was among those men, and spake,

"It is well that we have met here; now we may well take up our ancient quarrel, and now I will try which of us twain may do the most."

Biorn said that was an old tale to him, "But if there has been aught of such things between us, I will boot for it, so that thou mayst think thyself well holden thereof."

Then Grettir sang,

"In hard strife I slew the bear,
Thereof many a man doth hear;
Then the cloak I oft had worn,
By the beast to rags was torn;

Thou, O braggart ring-bearer,
Wrought that jest upon me there,
Now thou payest for thy jest,
Not in words am I the best."

Of the slaying of Biorn

Biorn said, that oft had greater matters than these been atoned for.

Grettir said, that few had chosen hitherto to strive to trip him up with spite and envy, nor ever had he taken fee for such, and still must matters fare in likewise. "Know thou that we shall not both of us go hence whole men if I may have my will, and a coward's name will I lay on thy back, if thou darest not to fight."

Now Biorn saw that it would avail nought to try to talk himself free; so he took his weapons and went a-land.

Then they ran one at the other and fought, but not long before Biorn got sore wounded, and presently fell dead to earth. But when Biorn's fellows saw that, they went to their ship, and made off north along the land to meet Thorkel and told him of this hap: he said it had not come to pass ere it might have been looked for.

Soon after this Thorkel went south to Drontheim, and met there Earl Svein. Grettir went south to Mere after the slaying of Biorn, and found his friend Thorfinn, and told him what had befallen. Thorfinn gave him a good welcome, and said,

"It is well now that thou art in need of a friend; with me shalt thou abide until these matters have come to an end."

Grettir thanked him for his offer, and said he would take it now.

Earl Svein was dwelling in Drontheim, at Steinker, when he heard of Biorn's slaying; at that time there was with him Hiarandi, the brother of Biorn, and he was the Earl's man; he was exceeding wroth when he heard of the slaying of Biorn, and begged the Earl's aid in the matter, and the Earl gave his word thereto.

Then he sent men to Thorfinn, and summoned to him

Of the slaying of Biorn

both him and Grettir. Thorfinn and Grettir made ready at once at the Earl's bidding to go north to Drontheim to meet him. Now the Earl held a council on the matter, and bade Hiarandi to be thereat; Hiarandi said he would not bring his brother to purse; "and I shall either fare in a like wise with him, or else wreak vengeance for him." Now when the matter was looked into, the Earl found that Biorn had been guilty towards Grettir in many ways; and Thorfinn offered weregild, such as the Earl deemed might be fitting for Biorn's kin to take; and thereon he had much to say on the freedom which Grettir had wrought for men north there in the land, when he slew the bearserks, as has been aforesaid.

The Earl answered, "With much truth thou sayest this, Thorfinn, that was the greatest land-ridding, and good it seems to us to take weregild because of thy words; and withal Grettir is a man well renowned because of his strength and prowess."

Hiarandi would not take the settlement, and they broke up the meeting. Thorfinn got his kinsman Arnbiorn to go about with Grettir day by day, for he knew that Hiarandi lay in wait for his life.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SLAYING OF HIARANDI.

IT happened one day that Grettir and Arnbiorn were walking through some streets for their sport, that as they came past a certain court gate, a man bounded forth therefrom with axe borne aloft, and drave it at Grettir with both hands; he was all unwares of this, and walked on slowly; Arnbiorn caught timely sight of the man, and seized Grettir, and thrust him on so hard that he fell on his knee; the axe smote the shoulder-blade, and cut sideways out under the arm-pit, and a great wound it was. Grettir turned about nimbly, and drew the short-sword, and saw that there was Hiarandi. Now the axe stuck fast in the road, and it was slow work for Hiarandi to draw it to him again, and in this very nick of time Grettir hewed at him, and the blow fell on the upper arm, near the shoulder, and cut it off; then the fellows of Hiarandi rushed forth, five of them, and a fight forthwith

befell, and speedy change happed there, for Grettir and Arnbiorn slew those who were with Hiarandi, all but one, who got off, and forthwith went to the Earl to tell him these tidings. The slaying of Hiarandi

The Earl was exceeding wroth when he heard of this, and the second day thereafter he had a Thing summoned. Then they, Thorfinn and Grettir, came both to the Thing. The Earl put forth against Grettir the guilt for these manslaughters; he owned them all, and said he had had to defend his hands.

"Whereof methinks I bear some marks on me," says Grettir, "and surely I had found death if Arnbiorn had not saved me."

The Earl answered that it was ill hap that Grettir was not slain.

"For many a man's bane wilt thou be if thou livest, Grettir."

Then came to the Earl Bessi, son of Skald-Torfa, a fellow and a friend to Grettir; he and Thorfinn went before the Earl and prayed him respite for Grettir, and offered, that the Earl alone should doom in this matter, but that Grettir might have peace and leave to dwell in the land.

The Earl was slow to come to any settlement, but suffered himself to be led thereto because of their prayers. There respite was granted to Grettir till the next spring; still the Earl would not settle the peace till Gunnar, the brother of Biorn and Hiarandi, was thereat; now Gunnar was a court-owner in Tunsberg.

In the spring, the Earl summoned Grettir and Thorfinn east to Tunsberg, for he would dwell there east while the most sail was thereat. Now they went east thither, and the Earl was before them in the town when they came. Here Grettir found his brother, Thorstein Dromund, who was fain of him and bade him abide with him: Thorstein was a court-owner in the town. Grettir told him all about his matters, and Thorstein gave a good hearing thereto, but bade him beware of Gunnar. And so the spring wore on.

CHAPTER XXIV. OF THE SLAYING OF GUNNAR, & GRETTIR'S STRIFE WITH EARL SVEIN.

Of the slaying of Gunnar

NOW Gunnar was in the town, and lay in wait for Grettir always and everywhere. It happened on a day that Grettir sat in a booth a-drinking, for he would not throw himself in Gunnar's way. But, when he wotted of it the least, the door was driven at so hard that it brake asunder, four men all-armed burst in, and there was Gunnar and his fellows.

They set on Grettir, but he caught up his weapons which hung over him, and then drew aback into the corner, whence he defended himself, having before him the shield, but dealing blows with the short-sword, nor did they have speedy luck with him. Now he smote at one of Gunnar's fellows, and more he needed not; then he advanced forth on the floor, and therewith they were driven doorward through the booth, and there fell another man of Gunnar's; then were Gunnar and his fellows fain of flight; one of them got to the door, struck his foot against the threshold and lay there grovelling and was slow in getting to his feet. Gunnar had his shield before him, and gave back before Grettir, but he set on him fiercely and leaped up on the cross-beam by the door. Now the hands of Gunnar and the shield were within the door, but Grettir dealt a blow down amidst Gunnar and the shield and cut off both his hands by the wrist, and he fell aback out of the door; then Grettir dealt him his death-blow.

But in this nick of time got to his feet Gunnar's man, who had lain fallen awhile, and he ran straightway to see the Earl, and to tell him these tidings.

Earl Svein was wondrous wroth at this tale, and forthwith summoned a Thing in the town. But when Thorfinn and Thorstein Dromund knew this, they brought together their kin and friends and came thronging to the Thing. Very cross-grained was the Earl, and it was no easy matter to come to speech with him. Thorfinn went up first before the Earl and said, "For this cause am I come hither, to offer thee peace and honour for these man-slayings that Grettir has wrought;

thou alone shalt shape and settle all, if the man hath respite of his life."

Of the slaying of Gunnar

The Earl answered sore wroth: "Late wilt thou be loth to ask respite for Grettir; but in my mind it is that thou hast no good cause in court; he has now slain three brothers, one at the heels of the other, who were men so brave that they would none bear the other to purse. Now it will not avail thee, Thorfinn, to pray for Grettir, for I will not thus bring wrongs into the land so as to take boot for such unmeasured misdeeds."

Then came forward Bessi, Skald-Torfa's son, and prayed the Earl to take the offered settlement. "Thereto," he said, "I will give up my goods, for Grettir is a man of great kin and a good friend of mine; thou mayst well see, Lord, that it is better to respite one man's life and to have therefor the thanks of many, thyself alone dooming the fines, than to break down thine honour, and risk whether thou canst seize the man or not."

The Earl answered, "Thou farest well herein, Bessi, and showest at all times thou art a high-minded man; still I am loth thus to break the laws of the land, giving respite to men of foredoomed lives."

Then stepped forth Thorstein Dromund and greeted the Earl, and made offers on Grettir's behalf, and laid thereto many fair words. The Earl asked for what cause he made offers for this man. Thorstein said they were brothers. The Earl said he had not known it before: "Now it is but the part of a man for thee to help him, but because we have made up our mind not to take money for these manslayings, we shall make all men of equal worth here, and Grettir's life will we have, whatsoever it shall cost and whensoever chance shall serve."

Thereat the Earl sprang up, and would listen in nowise to the offered atonements.

Now Thorfinn and his folk went home to Thorstein's court to make ready. But when the Earl saw this he bade all his men take weapons, and then he went thither with his folk

Of the slaying of Gunnar

in array. But before he came up Thorfinn and his men ordered themselves for defence before the gate of the court. Foremost stood Thorfinn and Thorstein and Grettir, and then Bessi, and each of them had a large following of men with him.

The Earl bade them to give up Grettir, nor to bring themselves into an evil strait; they made the very same offer as before. The Earl would not hearken thereto. Then Thorfinn and Thorstein said that the Earl should have more ado yet for the getting of Grettir's life, "For one fate shall befall us all; and it will be said thou workest hard for one man's life, if all we have to be laid on earth therefor."

The Earl said he should spare none of them, and now they were at the very point to fight.

Then went to the Earl many men of good-will, and prayed him not to push matters on to such great evils, and said they would have to pay heavily before all these were slain. The Earl found this rede to be wholesome, and became somewhat softened thereat.

Thereafter they drew up an agreement to which Thorstein and Thorfinn were willing enough, now that Grettir should have respite of his life. The Earl spake: "Know ye," quoth he, "that though I deal by way of mean words with these manslayings at this time, yet I call this no settlement, but I am loth to fight against my own folk; though I see that ye make little of me in this matter."

Then said Thorfinn, "This is a greater honour for thee, Lord, for that thou alone wilt doom the weregild."

Then the Earl said that Grettir should go in peace, as for him, out to Iceland, when ships fared out, if so they would; they said that they would take this. They paid the Earl fines to his mind, and parted from him with little friendship. Grettir went with Thorfinn; he and his brother Thorstein parted fondly.

Thorfinn got great fame for the aid he had given Grettir against such overwhelming power as he had to deal with: none of the men who had helped Grettir were ever after well loved of the Earl, save Bessi.

So quoth Grettir:

Of the slaying of Gunnar

"To our helping came
The great of name;
Thorfinn was there
Born rule to bear;
When all bolts fell
Into locks, and hell
Cried out for my life
In the Tunsberg strife.

The Dromund fair[1]
Of red seas was there,
The stone of the bane
Of steel-gods vain:
From Bylest's kin
My life to win,
Above all men,
He laboured then.

Then the king's folk
Would strike no stroke
To win my head;
So great grew dread;
For the leopard came
With byrni's flame,
And on thoughts-burg wall
Should that bright fire fall."

Grettir went back north with Thorfinn, and was with him till he gat him to ship with chapmen who were bound out to Iceland: he gave him many fair gifts of raiment, and a fair-stained saddle and a bridle withal. They parted in friendship, and Thorfinn bade him come to him whensoever he should come back to Norway.

[1] The stone of steel-god's bane is Thorstein; Bylest's kin is Hel, death. The leopard is Bessi Skald-Torfason; byrni's flame, his sword. Thought's-burg, a warrior's head.

Of the slaying of Thorgils Makson

CHAPTER XXV. THE SLAYING OF THORGILS MAKSON.

ASMUND the Grey-haired lived on at Biarg, while Grettir was abroad, and by that time he was thought to be the greatest of bonders in Midfirth. Thorkel Krafla died during those seasons that Grettir was out of Iceland. Thorvald Asgeirson farmed then at the Ridge in Waterdale, and waxed a great chief. He was the father of Dalla whom Isleif had to wife, he who afterwards was bishop at Skalholt.

Asmund had in Thorvald the greatest help in suits and in many other matters. At Asmund's grew up a man, hight Thorgils, called Thorgils Makson, near akin to Asmund. Thorgils was a man of great strength and gained much money by Asmund's foresight.

Asmund bought for Thorgils the land at Brookmeet, and there he farmed. Thorgils was a great store-gatherer, and went a-searching to the Strands every year, and there he gat for himself whales and other gettings; and a stout-hearted man he was.

In those days was at its height the waxing of the foster-brothers, Thorgeir Havarson and Thormod Coalbrowskald; they had a boat and went therein far and wide, and were not thought men of much even-dealing. It chanced one summer that Thorgils Makson found a whale on the common drift-lands, and forthwith he and his folk set about cutting it up.

But when the foster-brothers heard thereof they went thither, and at first their talk had a likely look out. Thorgils offered that they should have the half of the uncut whale; but they would have for themselves all the uncut, or else divide all into halves, both the cut and the uncut. Thorgils flatly refused to give up what was cut of the whale; and thereat things grew hot between them, and forthwithal both sides caught up their weapons and fought. Thorgeir and Thorgils fought long together without either losing or gaining and both were of the eagerest. Their strife was both fierce and long, but the end of it was, that Thorgils fell dead to earth before Thorgeir; but Thormod and the men of Thorgils

fought in another place; Thormod had the best of that strife, and three of Thorgils' men fell before him. After the slaying of Thorgils, his folk went back east to Midfirth, and brought his dead body with them. Men thought that they had the greatest loss in him. But the foster-brothers took all the whale to themselves. Of the slaying of Thorgils Makson

This meeting Thormod tells of in that drapa that he made on Thorgeir dead. Asmund the Grey-haired heard of the slaying of Thorgils his kinsman; he was suitor in the case for Thorgils' slaying, he went and took witnesses to the wounds, and summoned the case before the Althing, for then this seemed to be law, as the case had happened in another quarter. And so time wears on.

CHAPTER XXVI. OF THORSTEIN KUGGSON, AND THE GATHERING FOR THE BLOODSUIT FOR THE SLAYING OF THORGILS MAKSON.

THERE was a man called Thorstein, he was the son of Thorkel Kugg, the son of Thord the Yeller, the son of Olaf Feilan, the son of Thorstein the Red, the son of Aud the Deeply-wealthy. The mother of Thorstein Kuggson was Thurid the daughter of Asgeir Madpate, Asgeir was father's brother of Asmund the Grey-haired.

Thorstein Kuggson was suitor in the case about Thorgils Makson's slaying along with Asmund the Grey-haired, who now sent word to Thorstein that he should come to meet him. Thorstein was a great champion, and the wildest-tempered of men; he went at once to meet his kinsman Asmund, and they talked the blood-suit over together. Thorstein was mightily wroth and said that no atonement should be for this, and said they had strength of kin enough to bring about for the slaying either outlawry or vengeance on men. Asmund said that he would follow him in whatsoever he would have done. They rode north to Thorvald their kinsman to pray his aid, and he quickly gave his word and said yea thereto. So they settled the suit against Thorgeir and Thormod; then Thorstein rode home to his farmstead; he then farmed at

Thorstein Kuggson

Liarskogar in Hvamsveit. Skeggi farmed at Hvam, he also joined in the suit with Thorstein. Skeggi was the son of Thorarin Fylsenni, the son of Thord the Yeller; the mother of Skeggi was Fridgerd, daughter of Thord of Head.

These had a many men with them at the Thing, and pushed their suit with great eagerness.

Asmund and Thorvald rode from the north with six tens of men, and sat at Liarskogar many nights.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE SUIT FOR THE SLAYING OF THORGILS MAKSON.

A MAN hight Thorgils abode at Reek-knolls in those days, he was the son of Ari, the son of Mar, the son of Atli the Red, the son of Ulf the Squinter, who settled at Reekness; the mother of Thorgils Arison was Thorgerd, the daughter of Alf a-Dales; another daughter of Alf was Thorelf, mother of Thorgeir Havarson. There had Thorgeir good kinship to trust in, for Thorgils was the greatest chief in the Westfirthers' quarter. He was a man of such bountifulness, that he gave food to any free-born man as long as he would have it, and therefore there was at all times a throng of people at Reek-knolls; thus had Thorgils much renown of his housekeeping. He was a man withal of good will and foreknowledge. Thorgeir was with Thorgils in winter, but went to the Strands in summer.

After the slaying of Thorgils Makson, Thorgeir went to Reek-knolls and told Thorgils Arison these tidings; Thorgils said that he was ready to give him harbour with him, "But, methinks," he says, "that they will be heavy in the suit, and I am loth to eke out the troubles. Now I shall send a man to Thorstein and bid weregild for the slaying of Thorgils; but if he will not take atonement I shall not defend the case stiffly."

Thorgeir said he would trust to his foresight. In autumn Thorgils sent a man to Thorstein Kuggson to try settling the case, but he was cross-grained to deal with as to the taking money for the blood-suit of Thorgils Makson; but about

the other manslayings, he said he would do as wise men should urge him. Now when Thorgils heard this, he called Thorgeir to him for a talk, and asked him what kind of aid he now deemed meetest for him; Thorgeir said that it was most to his mind to go abroad if he should be outlawed. Thorgils said that that should be tried. A ship lay up Northriver in Burgfirth; in that keel Thorgils secretly paid faring for the foster-brothers, and thus the winter passed. Thorgils heard that Asmund and Thorstein drew together many men to the Althing, and sat in Liarskogar. He drew out the time of riding from home, for he would that Asmund and Thorstein should have ridden by before him to the south, when he came from the west; and so it fell out. Thorgils rode south, and with him rode the foster-brothers. In this ride Thorgeir killed Bundle-Torfi of Marswell, and Skuf withal, and Biarni in Dog-dale; thus says Thormod in Thorgeir's-Drapa:

The suit for the slaying of Thorgils Makson

"Mighty strife the warrior made
When to earth was Makson laid,
Well the sword-shower wrought he there,
Flesh the ravens got to tear;
Then when Skuf and Biarni fell,
He was there the tale to tell;
Sea-steed's rider took his way
Through the thickest of the fray."

Thorgils settled the peace for the slaying of Skuf and Biarni then and there in the Dale, and tarried longer than his will was before; Thorgeir went to ship, but Thorgils to the Althing, and came not thither until men were going to the courts.

Then Asmund the Grey-haired challenged the defence for the blood-suit on the slaying of Thorgils Makson. Thorgils went to the court and offered were-gild for the slaying, if thereby Thorgeir might become free of guilt; he put forth for defence in the suit whether they had not free catch on all common foreshores. The lawman was asked if this was a law-

The suit for the slaying of Thorgils Makson

ful defence. Skapti was the lawman, and backed Asmund for the sake of their kinship. He said this was law if they were equal men, but said that bonders had a right to take before batchelors. Asmund said that Thorgils had offered an even sharing to the foster-brothers in so much of the whale as was uncut when they came thereto; and therewith that way of defence was closed against them. Now Thorstein and his kin followed up the suit with much eagerness, and nought was good to them but that Thorgeir should be made guilty.

Thorgils saw that one of two things was to be done, either to set on with many men, not knowing what might be gained thereby, or to suffer them to go on as they would; and, whereas Thorgeir had been got on board ship, Thorgils let the suit go on unheeded.

Thorgeir was outlawed, but for Thormod was taken weregild, and he to be quit. By this blood-suit Thorstein and Asmund were deemed to have waxed much. And now men ride home from the Thing.

Some men would hold talk that Thorgils had lightly backed the case, but he heeded their talk little, and let anyone say thereon what he would.

But when Thorgeir heard of this outlawry, he said:

"Fain am I that those who have made me an outlaw should have full pay for this, ere all be over."

There was a man called Gaut Sleitason, who was akin to Thorgils Makson. Gaut had made ready to go in this same ship wherein Thorgeir was to sail. He bristled up against Thorgeir, and showed mighty ill-will against him and went about scowling; when the chapmen found this out, they thought it far from safe that both should sail in one ship. Thorgeir said he heeded not how much soever Gaut would bend his brows on him; still it was agreed that Gaut should take himself off from the ship, whereupon he went north into the upper settlements, and that time nought happened between him and Thorgeir, but out of this sprang up between them ill-blood, as matters showed after.

CHAPTER XXVIII. GRETTIR COMES OUT TO ICELAND AGAIN.

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

THIS summer Grettir Asmundson came out to Skagafirth: he was in those days so famed a man for strength and prowess, that none was deemed his like among young men. He rode home to Biarg forthwith, and Asmund welcomed him meetly. At that time Atli managed the farming matters, and well things befell betwixt the brothers.

But now Grettir waxed so overbearing, that he deemed that nought was too much for him to do. At that time had many men grown into full manhood who were young in the days when Grettir was wont to play with them on Midfirthwater before he went abroad; one of these was Audun, who then dwelt at Audunstead, in Willowdale; he was the son of Asgeir, the son of Audun, the son of Asgeir Madpate; of all men he was the strongest north there; but he was thought to be the gentlest of neighbours. Now it came into Grettir's mind that he had had the worst of Audun in that ball-play whereof is told before; and now he would fain try which of the twain had ripened the most since then. For this cause Grettir took his way from home, and fared unto Audunstead. This was in early mowing tide; Grettir was well dight, and rode in a fair-stained saddle of very excellent workmanship, which Thorfinn had given him; a good horse he had withal, and all weapons of the best. Grettir came early in the day to Audunstead and knocked at the door. Few folk were within; Grettir asked if Audun was at home. Men said that he had gone to fetch victuals from the hill-dairy. Then Grettir took the bridle off his horse; the field was unmowed, and the horse went whereas the grass was the highest. Grettir went into the hall, sat down on the seat-beam, and thereon fell asleep. Soon after Audun came home, and sees a horse grazing in the field with a fair-stained saddle on; Audun was bringing victuals on two horses, and carried curds on one of them in drawn-up hides, tied round about: this fashion men called curd-bags. Audun took the loads off the horses and carried the curd-bags in his arms into the house.

Now it was dark before his eyes, and Grettir stretched his

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

foot from out the beam so that Audun fell flat down headforemost on to the curd-bag, whereby the bonds of the bag brake; Audun leaped up and asked who was that rascal in the way. Grettir named himself.

Then said Audun, "Rashly hast thou done herein; what is thine errand then?"

Grettir said, "I will fight with thee."

"First I will see about my victuals," said Audun.

"That thou mayst well do," said Grettir, "if thou canst not charge other folk therewith."

Then Audun stooped down and caught up the curd-bag and dashed it against Grettir's bosom, and bade him first take what was sent him; and therewith was Grettir all smothered in the curds; and a greater shame he deemed that than if Audun had given him a great wound.

Now thereon they rushed at one another and wrestled fiercely; Grettir set on with great eagerness, but Audun gave back before him. Yet he feels that Grettir has outgrown him in strength. Now all things in their way were kicked out of place, and they were borne on wrestling to and fro throughout all the hall; neither spared his might, but still Grettir was the toughest of the twain, and at last Audun fell, having torn all weapons from Grettir.

Now they grapple hard with one another, and huge cracking was all around them. Withal a great din was heard coming through the earth underneath the farmstead, and Grettir heard some one ride up to the houses, get off his horse, and stride in with great strides; he sees a man come up, of goodly growth, in a red kirtle and with a helmet on his head. He took his way into the hall, for he had heard clamorous doings there as they were struggling together; he asked what was in the hall.

Grettir named himself, "But who asks thereof?" quoth he.

"Bardi am I hight," said the new comer.

"Art thou Bardi, the son of Gudmund, from Asbiornsness?"

"That very man am I," said Bardi; "but what art thou doing?"

Grettir said, "We, Audun and I, are playing here in sport."

"I know not as to the sport thereof," said Bardi, "nor are ye even men either; thou art full of unfairness and overbearing, and he is easy and good to deal with; so let him stand up forthwith."

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

Grettir said, "*Many a man stretches round the door to the lock;* and meseems it lies more in thy way to avenge thy brother Hall[1] than to meddle in the dealings betwixt me and Audun."

"At all times I hear this," said Bardi, "nor know I if that will be avenged, but none the less I will that thou let Audun be at peace, for he is a quiet man."

Grettir did so at Bardi's bidding, nathless, little did it please him. Bardi asked for what cause they strove.

Grettir sang:

"Prithee, Audun, who can tell,
But that now thy throat shall swell;
That from rough hands thou shalt gain
By our strife a certain pain.
E'en such wrong as I have done,
I of yore from Audun won,
When the young, fell-creeping lad
At his hands a choking had."

Bardi said that certes it was a matter to be borne with, if he had had to avenge himself.

"Now I will settle matters between you," quoth Bardi; "I will that ye part, leaving things as they are, that thereby there may be an end of all between you."

This they let hold good, but Grettir took ill liking to Bardi and his brothers.

Now they all rode off, and when they were somewhat on their way, Grettir spake,

"I have heard that thou hast will to go to Burgfirth this summer, and I now offer to go south with thee; and methinks that herein I do for thee more than thou art worthy of."

[1] Who was killed in Norway by the sons of Harek, and whose revenge is told of in the Saga of the Heath slayings (existing in fragment).

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

Hereat was Bardi glad, and speedily said yea thereto, and bade him have thanks for this; and thereupon they parted. But a little after Bardi came back and said:

"I will have it known that thou goest not unless my foster-father Thorarin will have it so, for he shall have all the rule of the faring."

"Well mightest thou, methinks, have full freedom as to thine own redes," said Grettir, "and my faring I will not have laid under the choice of other folk; and I shall mislike it if thou castest me aside from thy fellowship."

Now either went their way, and Bardi said he should let Grettir know for sure if Thorarin would that he should fare with him, but that otherwise he might sit quiet at home. Grettir rode home to Biarg, but Bardi to his own house.

CHAPTER XXIX. OF THE HORSE-FIGHT AT LONGFIT.

THAT summer was settled to be a great horse-fight at Longfit, below Reeks. Thither came many men. Atli of Biarg had a good horse, a black-maned roan of Keingala's kin, and father and son had great love for that horse. The brothers, Kormak and Thorgils of Meal, had a brown horse, trusty in fight. These were to fight their horse against Atli of Biarg. And many other good horses were there.

Odd, the Foundling-skald, of Kormak's kin, was to follow the horse of his kinsman through the day. Odd was then growing a big man, and bragged much of himself, and was untameable and reckless. Grettir asked of Atli his brother, who should follow his horse.

"I am not so clear about that," said he.

"Wilt thou that I stand by it?" said Grettir.

"Be thou then very peaceable, kinsman," said Atli, "for here have we to deal with overbearing men."

"Well, let them pay for their own insolence," said Grettir, "if they know not how to hold it back."

Now are the horses led out, but all stood forth on the river-bank tied together. There was a deep hollow in the

river down below the bank. The horses bit well at each other, and the greatest sport it was. Of the Horse-fight at Longfit

Odd drave on his horse with all his might, but Grettir held back, and seized the tail with one hand, and the staff wherewith he goaded the horse he held in the other. Odd stood far before his horse, nor was it so sure that he did not goad Atli's horse from his hold. Grettir made as if he saw it not. Now the horses bore forth towards the river. Then Odd drave his staff at Grettir, and smote the shoulder-blade, for that Grettir turned the shoulder towards him: that was so mighty a stroke, that the flesh shrank from under it, but Grettir was little scratched.

Now in that nick of time the horses reared up high, and Grettir ran under his horse's hocks, and thrust his staff so hard at the side of Odd that three ribs brake in him, but he was hurled out into deep water, together with his horse and all the mares that were tied together. Then men swam out to him and dragged him out of the river; then was a great hooting made thereat; Kormak's folk ran to their weapons, as did the men of Biarg in another place. But when the Ramfirthers and the men of Waterness saw that, they went betwixt them, and they were parted and went home, but both sides had ill-will one with the other, though they sat peacefully at home for a while.

Atli was sparing of speech over this, but Grettir was right unsparing, and said that they would meet another time if his will came to pass.

CHAPTER XXX. OF THORBIORN OXMAIN AND THORBIORN TARDY, & OF GRETTIR'S MEETING WITH KORMAK ON RAMFIRTH-NECK.

THORBIORN was the name of a man who dwelt at Thorodstead in Ramfirth; he was the son of Arnor Hay-nose,[1] the son of Thorod, who had settled Ramfirth on that side out as far as Bank was on the other.

[1] In the Landnáma he is called "Hy-nef;" the meaning is doubtful, but it seems that the author of this history means to call him Hay-nose.

Grettir's meeting with Kormak

Thorbiorn was the strongest of all men; he was called Oxmain. Thorod was the name of his brother, he was called Drapa-stump; their mother was Gerd, daughter of Bodvar, from Bodvars-knolls. Thorbiorn was a great and hardy warrior, and had many men with him; he was noted as being worse at getting servants than other men, and barely gave he wages to any man, nor was he thought a good man to deal with. There was a kinsman of his hight Thorbiorn, and bynamed Tardy; he was a sailor, and the namesakes were partners. He was ever at Thorodstead, and was thought to better Thorbiorn but little. He was a fault-finding fellow, and went about jeering at most men.

There was a man hight Thorir, the son of Thorkel of Boardere. He farmed first at Meals in Ramfirth; his daughter was Helga, whom Sleita-Helgi had to wife, but after the manslaying in Fairslope Thorir set up for himself his abode south in Hawkdale, and farmed at the Pass, and sold the land at Meals to Thorhall, son of Gamli the Vendlander.[1] His son was Gamli, who had to wife Ranveig, daughter of Asmund the Grey-haired, and Grettir's sister. They dwelt at that time at Meals, and had good hap. Thorir of the Pass had two sons, one hight Gunnar, the other Thorgeir; they were both hopeful men, and had then taken the farm after their father, yet were for ever with Thorbiorn Oxmain, and were growing exceeding unruly.

The summer after that just told, Kormak and Thorgils and Narfi their kinsman rode south to Northriverdale, on some errand of theirs. Odd the Foundlingskald fared also with them, and by then was gotten healed of the stiffness he gained at the horse-fight. But while they were south of the heath, Grettir fared from Biarg, and with him two house-carles of Atli's. They rode over to Bowerfell, and thence over the mountain neck to Ramfirth, and came to Meals in the evening.

They were there three nights; Ranveig and Gamli welcomed Grettir well, and bade him abide with them, but he had will to ride home.

[1] Ed. 1853 has the "Widelanded, Víðlendings," which here is altered agreeably to the correction in ch. 14, p. 23.

Then Grettir heard that Kormak and his fellows were come from the south, and had guested at Tongue through the night. Grettir got ready early to leave Meals; Gamli offered him men to go with him. Now Grim was the name of Gamli's brother; he was of all men the swiftest; he rode with Grettir with another man; they were five in all. Thus they rode on till they came to Ramfirth-neck, west of Bowerfell. There stands a huge stone that is called Grettir's-heave; for he tried long that day to lift that stone, and thus they delayed till Kormak and his fellows were come. Grettir rode to meet them, and both sides jumped off their horses. Grettir said it was more like free men now to deal blows of the biggest, than to fight with staves like wandering churles. Then Kormak bade them take the challenge in manly wise, and do their best. Thereafter they ran at one another and fought. Grettir went before his men, and bade them take heed, that none came at his back. Thus they fought a while, and men were wounded on both sides. Grettir's meeting with Kormak

Now Thorbiorn Oxmain had ridden that day over the neck to Bowerfell, and when he rode back he saw their meeting. There were with him then Thorbiorn the Tardy, and Gunnar and Thorgeir, Thorir's sons, and Thorod Drapastump. Now when they came thereto, Thorbiorn called on his men to go between them. But the others were by then so eager that they could do nought. Grettir broke forth fiercely, and before him were the sons of Thorir, and they both fell as he thrust them from him; they waxed exceeding furious thereat, insomuch that Gunnar dealt a death-blow at a housecarle of Atli; and when Thorbiorn saw that, he bade them part, saying withal that he would aid which side soever should pay heed to his words. By then were fallen two housecarles of Kormak; but Grettir saw that it would hardly do if Thorbiorn should bring aid to them against him, wherefore now he gave up the battle, and all were wounded who had been at that meeting. But much it misliked Grettir that they had been parted.

Thereafter either side rode home, nor did they settle peace after these slayings. Thorbiorn the Tardy made much mocking at all this, therefore things began to worsen betwixt the

Grettir's meeting with Kormak

men of Biarg and Thorbiorn Oxmain, so that therefrom fell much ill-will as came to be known after. No boot was bidden to Atli for his house-carle, but he made as if he knew it not. Grettir sat at home at Biarg until Twainmonth.[1] Nor is it said in story that he and Kormak met ever again after these things betid.

CHAPTER XXXI. HOW GRETTIR MET BARDI, THE SON OF GUDMUND, AS HE CAME BACK FROM THE HEATH-SLAYINGS.

BARDI, the son of Gudmund, and his brothers, rode home to Asbiornsness after their parting with Grettir. They were the sons of Gudmund, the son of Solmund. The mother of Solmund was Thorlaug, the daughter of Sæmund, the South-Island man, the foster-brother of Ingimund the Old, and Bardi was a very noble man.

Now soon he rode to find Thorarin the Wise, his foster-father. He welcomed Bardi well, and asked what gain he had got of followers and aid, for they had before taken counsel over Bardi's journey. Bardi answered that he had got the aid of that man to his fellow, whose aid he deemed better than that of any other twain. Thorarin got silent thereat, and then said,

"That man will be Grettir Asmundson."

"*Sooth is the sage's guess*," said Bardi; "that is the very man, foster-father."

Thorarin answered, "True it is, that Grettir is much before any other man of those who are to choose in our land, and late will he be won with weapons, if he be hale, yet it misdoubts me how far he will bring thee luck; but of thy following all must not be luckless, and enough ye will do, though he fare not with thee: nowise shall he go if I may have my will."

"This I could not have deemed, foster-father," said he, "that thou wouldst grudge me the aid of the bravest of men, if my need should be hard. A man cannot foresee all things when he is driven on as methinks I am."

[1] The second month in the year, corresponding to our September.

"Thou wilt do well," said Thorarin; "though thou abidest by my foresight." How Grettir met Bardi

Now thus must things be, even as Thorarin would, that no word more was sent to Grettir, but Bardi fared south to Burgfirth, and then befell the Heath-slayings.

Grettir was at Biarg when he heard that Bardi had ridden south; he started up in anger for that no word had been sent to him, and said that not thus should they part. He had news of them when they were looked for coming from the south, and thereat he rode down to Thorey's-peak, for the waylaying of Bardi's folk as they came back from the south: he fared from the homestead up on to the hill-side, and abode there. That same day rode Bardi and his men north over Twodaysway, from the Heath-slayings; they were six in all, and every man sore wounded; and when they came forth by the homestead, then said Bardi,

"A man there is up on the hill-side; a big man, armed. What man do ye take him to be?"

They said that they wotted not who he was.

Bardi said, "Methinks there," quoth he, "is Grettir Asmundson; and if so it is, there will he meet us. I deem that it has misliked him that he fared not with us, but methinks we are not in good case, if he is bent on doing us harm. I now shall send after men to Thorey's-peak, and stake nought on the chance of his ill-will."

They said this was a good rede, and so was it done.

Thereafter Bardi and his folk rode on their way. Grettir saw where they fared, and went in the way before them, and when they met, either greeted other.

Grettir asked for tidings, but Bardi told them fearlessly, even as they were. Grettir asked what men were in that journey with him. Bardi said that there were his brothers, and Eyulf his brother-in-law.

"Thou hast now cleared thyself from all blame," said Grettir; "but now is it best that we try between us who is of most might here."

Said Bardi, "Too nigh to my garth have deeds of hard

How Grettir met Bardi

need been, than that I should fight with thee without a cause, and well methinks have I thrust these from me."

"Thou growest soft, methinks, Bardi," said Grettir, "since thou durst not fight with me."

"Call that what thou wilt," said Bardi; "but in some other stead would I that thou wreak thine high-handedness than here on me; and that is like enough, for now does thy rashness pass all bounds."

Grettir thought ill of his spaedom, and now doubted within himself whether he should set on one or other of them; but it seemed rash to him, as they were six and he one; and in that nick of time came up the men from Thorey's-peak to the aid of Bardi and his folk; then Grettir drew off from them, and turned aside to his horse. But Bardi and his fellows went on their way, nor were there farewells between them at parting.

No further dealings between Bardi and Grettir are told of after these things betid.

Now so has Grettir said that he deemed himself well matched to fight with most men, though they were three together, but he would have no mind to flee before four, without trying it; but against more would he fight only if he must needs defend his hand, as is said in this stave:

"My life trust I 'gainst three
Skilled in Mist's mystery;
Whatso in Hilda's weather
Shall bring the swords together;
If over four they are
My wayfaring that bar,
No gale of swords will I
Wake with them willingly."

After his parting with Bardi, Grettir fared to Biarg, and very ill he it thought that he might nowhere try his strength, and searched all about if anywhere might be somewhat wherewith he might contend.

CHAPTER XXXII. OF THE HAUNTING AT THORHALL-STEAD; AND HOW THORHALL TOOK A SHEPHERD BY THE REDE OF SKAPTI THE LAWMAN, AND OF WHAT BEFELL THEREAFTER.

The haunting at Thorhall-stead

THERE was a man hight Thorhall, who dwelt at Thorhall-stead, in Shady-vale, which runs up from Waterdale. Thorhall was the son of Grim, son of Thorhall, the son of Fridmund, who settled Shady-vale. Thorhall had a wife hight Gudrun. Grim was their son, and Thurid their daughter; they were wellnigh grown up.

Thorhall was a rich man, but mostly in cattle, so that no man had so much of live-stock as he. He was no chief, but an honest bonder he was. Much was that place haunted, and hardly could he get a shepherd that he deemed should serve his turn. He sought counsel of many men as to what he might do therewith, but none gave him a rede that might serve him. Thorhall rode each summer to the Thing, and good horses he had. But one summer at the Althing, Thorhall went to the booth of Skapti Thorodson the Lawman. Skapti was the wisest of men, and wholesome were his redes when folk prayed him for them. But he and his father differed thus much, that Thorod was foretelling, and yet was called under-handed of some folk; but Skapti showed forth to every man what he deemed would avail most, if it were not departed from, therefore was he called "Father-betterer."

Now Thorhall went into Skapti's booth, and Skapti greeted him well, for he knew that he was a rich man in cattle, and he asked him what were the tidings.

Thorhall answered, "A wholesome counsel would I have from thee."

"Little am I meet for that," said Skapti; "but what dost thou stand in need of?"

Thorhall said, "So is the matter grown to be, that but a little while do my shepherds avail me; for ever will they get badly hurt; but others will not serve to the end, and now no one will take the job when he knows what bides in the way."

The haunting at Thorhall-stead

Skapti answered, "Some evil things shall be there then, since men are more unwilling to watch thy sheep than those of other men. Now, therefore, as thou hast sought rede of me, I shall get thee a shepherd who is hight Glam, a Swede, from Sylgsdale, who came out last summer, a big man and a strong, though he is not much to the mind of most folk."

Thorhall said he heeded that little if he watched the sheep well.

Skapti said that little would be the look out for others, if he could not watch them, despite his strength and daring.

Then Thorhall went out from him, and this was towards the breaking up of the Thing. Thorhall missed two dun horses, and fared himself to seek for them; wherefore folk deem that he was no great man. He went up to Sledgehill, and south along the fell which is called Armansfell; then he saw how a man fared down from Godi's-wood, and bore faggots on a horse. Soon they met together, and Thorhall asked him of his name. He said that he was called Glam. This man was great of growth, uncouth to look on; his eyes were grey and glaring, and his hair was wolf-grey.

Thorhall stared at him somewhat when he saw this man, till he saw that this was he to whom he had been sent.

"What work hast thou best will to do?" said Thorhall.

Glam said, "That he was of good mind to watch sheep in winter."

"Wilt thou watch my sheep?" said Thorhall. "Skapti has given thee to my will."

"So only shall my service avail thee, if I go of my own will, for I am evil of mood if matters mislike me," quoth Glam.

"I fear no hurt thereof," said Thorhall, "and I will that thou fare to my house."

"That may I do," said Glam, "perchance there are some troubles there?"

"Folk deem the place haunted," said Thorhall.

"Such bugs will not scare me," quoth Glam; "life seems to me less irksome thereby."

"It must needs seem so," said Thorhall, "and truly it is better that a mannikin be not there."

The haunting at Thorhall-stead

Thereafter they struck bargain together, and Glam is to to come at winter nights: then they parted, and Thorhall found his horses even where he had just been searching. Thorhall rode home, and thanked Skapti for his good deed.

Summer slipped away, and Thorhall heard nought of his shepherd, nor did any man know aught about him; but at the appointed time he came to Thorhall-stead. The bonder greeted him well, but none of the other folk could abide him, and the goodwife least of all.

Now he took to the sheep-watching, and little trouble it seemed to give him; he was big-voiced and husky, and all the beasts would run together when he whooped. There was a church at Thorhall-stead, but nowise would Glam come therein; he was a loather of church-song, and godless, foul-tempered, and surly, and no man might abide him.

Now passed the time till it came to Yule-eve; then Glam got up and straightway called for his meat. The goodwife said, "No Christian man is wont to eat meat this day, because that on the morrow is the first day of Yule," says she, "wherefore must men first fast to-day."

He answers, "Many follies have ye, whereof I see no good come, nor know I that men fare better now than when they paid no heed to such things; and methinks the ways of men were better when they were called heathens; and now will I have my meat, and none of this fooling."

Then said the housewife, "I know for sure that thou shalt fare ill to-day, if thou takest up this evil turn."

Glam bade her bring food straightway, and said that she should fare the worse else. She durst do but as he would, and so when he was full, he went out, growling and grumbling.

Now the weather was such, that mirk was over all, and the snow-flakes drave down, and great din there was, and still all grew much the worse, as the day slipped away.

The haunting at Thorhall-stead

Men heard the shepherd through the early morning, but less of him as the day wore; then it took to snowing and by evening there was a great storm; then men went to church, and thus time drew on to night-fall; and Glam came not home; then folk held talk, as to whether search should not be made for him, but, because of the snow-storm and pitch darkness, that came to nought.

Now he came not home on the night of Yule-eve; and thus men abide till after the time of worship; but further on in the day men fared out to the search, and found the sheep scattered wide about in fens, beaten down by the storm, or strayed up into the mountains. Thereafter they came on a great beaten place high up in the valley, and they thought it was as if strong wrestling had gone on there; for that all about the stones had been uptorn and the earth withal; now they looked closely and saw where Glam lay a little way therefrom; he was dead, and as blue as hell, and as great as a neat.

Huge loathing took them, at the sight of him, and they shuddered in their souls at him, yet they strove to bring him to church, but could get him only as far as a certain gil-edge a little way below.

Then they fared home to the farm, and told the bonder what had happed. He asked what was like to have been Glam's bane. They said they had tracked steps as great as if a cask-bottom had been stamped down, from there where the beaten place was, up to beneath sheer rocks which were high up the valley, and there along went great stains of blood. Now men drew from this, that the evil wight which had been there before had killed Glam, but had got such wounds as had been full enough for him, for of him none has since been ware.

The second day of Yule men went afresh to try to bring Glam to church; drag horses were put to him, but could move him nowhere where they had to go on even ground and not down hill; then folk had to go away therefrom leaving things done so far.

The third day the priest fared with them, and they sought all day, but found not Glam. The priest would go no more on such search, but the herdsman was found whenso the priest was not in their company. Then they let alone striving to bring him to church, and buried him there whereto he had been brought. The haunting at Thorhall-stead

A little time after men were ware that Glam lay not quiet. Folk got great hurt therefrom, so that many fell into swoons when they saw him, but others lost their wits thereby. But just after Yule men thought they saw him home at the farm. Folk became exceeding afeard thereat, and many fled there and then. Next Glam took to riding the house-roofs at night, so that he went nigh to breaking them in. Now he walked well-nigh night and day. Hardly durst men fare up into the dale, though they had errands enough there. And much scathe the men of the country-side deemed all this.

CHAPTER XXXIII. OF THE DOINGS OF GLAM AT THORHALL-STEAD.

IN the spring Thorhall got serving-men, and set up house at his farm; then the hauntings began to go off while the sun was at its height; and so things went on to midsummer. That summer a ship came out to Hunawater, wherein was a man named Thorgaut. He was an outlander of kin, big and stout, and two men's strength he had. He was unhired and single, and would fain do some work, for he was moneyless. Now Thorhall rode to the ship, and asked Thorgaut if he would work for him. Thorgaut said that might be, and moreover that he was not nice about work.

"Be sure in thy mind," said Thorhall, "that mannikins are of small avail there because of the hauntings that have been going on there for one while now; for I will not draw thee on by wiles."

Thorgaut answers, "I deem not myself given up, though I should see some wraithlings; matters will not be light when I am scared, nor will I give up my service for that."

Now they come speedily to a bargain, and Thorgaut is to

Of the doings of Glam

watch the sheep when winter comes. So the summer wore on, and Thorgaut betook himself to the shepherding at winter nights, and all liked him well. But ever came Glam home and rode the house-roofs; this Thorgaut deemed sport enough, and quoth he,

"The thrall must come nigher to scare me."

Thorhall bade him keep silence over that.

"Better will it be that ye have no trial together."

Thorgaut said, "Surely all might is shaken out of you, nor shall I drop down betwixt morn and eve at such talk."

Now so things go through the winter till Yule-tide. On Yule-eve the shepherd would fare out to his sheep. Then said the goodwife,

"Need is it that things go not the old way."

He answered, "Have no fear thereof, goodwife; something worth telling of will betide if I come not back."

And thereafter he went to his sheep; and the weather was somewhat cold, and there was much snow. Thorgaut was wont to come home when twilight had set in, and now he came not at that time. Folk went to church as they were wont. Men now thought things looked not unlike what they did before; the bonder would have search made for the shepherd, but the church-goers begged off, and said that they would not give themselves into the hands of trolls by night; so the bonder durst not go, and the search came to nought.

Yule-day, when men were full, they fared out and searched for the shepherd; they first went to Glam's cairn, because men thought that from his deeds came the loss of the herdsman. But when they came nigh to the cairn, there they saw great tidings, for there they found the shepherd, and his neck was broken, and every bone in him smashed. Then they brought him to church, and no harm came to men from Thorgaut afterwards.

But Glam began afresh to wax mighty; and such deeds he wrought, that all men fled away from Thorhall-stead, except the goodman and his goodwife. Now the same neatherd had long been there, and Thorhall would not let him go, because

of his good will and safe ward; he was well on in years, and was very loth to fare away, for he saw that all things the bonder had went to nought from not being watched. Of the doings of Glam

Now after midwinter one morning the housewife fared to the byre to milk the cows after the wonted time; by then was it broad daylight, for none other than the neatherd would trust themselves out before day; but he went out at dawn. She heard great cracking in the byre, with bellowing and roaring; she ran back crying out, and said she knew not what uncouth things were going on in the byre.

The bonder went out and came to the cows, which were goring one another; so he thought it no good to go in there, but went into the hay-barn. There he saw where lay the neatherd, and had his head in one boose[1] and his feet in the other; and he lay cast on his back. The bonder went up to him, and felt him all over with his hand, and finds soon that he was dead, and the spine of him broken asunder; it had been broken over the raised stone-edge of a boose.

Now the goodman thought there was no abiding there longer; so he fled away from the farm with all that he might take away; but all such live stock as was left behind Glam killed, and then he fared all over the valley and destroyed farms up from Tongue. But Thorhall was with his friends the rest of the winter.

No man might fare up the dale with horse or hound, because straightway it was slain. But when spring came, and the sun-light was the greatest, somewhat the hauntings abated; and now would Thorhall go back to his own land; he had no easy task in getting servants, nathless he set up house again at Thorhall-stead; but all went the same way as before; for when autumn came, the hauntings began to wax again; the bonder's daughter was most set on, and fared so that she died thereof. Many redes were sought, but nought could be done; men thought it like that all Waterdale would be laid waste if nought were found to better this.

[1] Boose, a cow-stall.

Grettir hears of the hauntings

CHAPTER XXXIV. GRETTIR HEARS OF THE HAUNTINGS.

NOW we take up the story where Grettir Asmundson sat at Biarg through the autumn after they parted, he and Slaying-Bardi at Thorey's-peak; and when the time of winter-nights had well-nigh come, Grettir rode from home north over the neck to Willowdale, and guested at Audunstead; he and Audun made a full peace, and Grettir gave Audun a good axe, and they talked of friendship between them. Audun dwelt long at Audunstead, and was a man of many and hopeful kin; his son was Egil, who married Ulfheid, daughter of Eyulf Gudmundson, and their son was Eyulf, who was slain at the Althing, he was the father of Orm, who was the chaplain of Bishop Thorlak.

Grettir rode north to Waterdale, and came to see his kin at Tongue. In those days dwelt there Jokul, the son of Bard, the mother's brother of Grettir: Jokul was a big man and a strong, and the most violent of men; he was a seafaring man, very wild, and yet a man of great account.

He greeted Grettir well, and he was there three nights. There were so many words about Glam's hauntings, that nought was so much spoken of as of that. Grettir asked closely about all things that had happed. Jokul said that thereof was told no more than the very truth; "And, perchance, thou art wishful to go there, kinsman?"

Grettir said that so it was.

Jokul bade him do it not, "Because it is a great risk for thy good luck, and thy kinsmen have much to hazard where thou art," said he, "for of young men we think there is none such as thou; but *from ill cometh ill* whereas Glam is; and far better it is to deal with men than with such evil wights."

Grettir said, "That he had a mind to go to Thorhall-stead and see how things went there."

Said Jokul, "Now I see it is of no avail to let thee; but so it is, as men say, *Good luck and goodliness are twain.*"

"*Woe is before one's own door when it is inside one's neigh-*

bour's; think how it may fare with thyself ere things are ended," said Grettir.

Grettir hears of the hauntings

Jokul answered, "Maybe we may both see somewhat of things to come, but neither may help aught herein."

They parted thereafter, and neither thought well of the other's foretelling.

CHAPTER XXXV. GRETTIR GOES TO THORHALL-STEAD, AND HAS TO DO WITH GLAM.

GRETTIR rode to Thorhall-stead, and the bonder gave him good welcome; he asked whither Grettir was minded to fare, but Grettir said he would be there that night if the bonder would have it so.

Thorhall said that he thanked him therefor, "But few have thought it a treat to guest here for any time; thou must needs have heard what is going on here, and I fain would that thou shouldest have no trouble from me: but though thou shouldest come off whole thyself, that know I for sure, that thou wilt lose thy horse, for none keeps his horse whole who comes here."

Grettir said that horses were to be had in plenty whatsoever might hap to this. Then Thorhall was glad that Grettir was to be there, and gave him a hearty welcome.

Now Grettir's horse was locked up in a strong house, and they went to sleep; and so the night slipped by, and Glam came not home.

Then said Thorhall, "Things have gone well at thy coming, for every night is Glam wont to ride the house-roofs, or break open doors, as thou mayst well see."

Grettir said, "Then shall one of two things be, either he shall not hold himself back for long, or the hauntings will abate for more than one night; I will abide here and see how things fare."

Thereafter they went to Grettir's horse, and nought had been tried against it; then all seemed to the bonder to go one way.

Grettir goes to Thorhall-stead

Now is Grettir there another night, and neither came the thrall home; that the farmer deemed very hopeful; withal he fared to see after Grettir's horse. When the farmer came there, he found the house broken into, but the horse was dragged out to the door, and every bone in him broken to pieces. Thorhall told Grettir what had happed there, and bade him save himself, "For sure is thy death if thou abidest Glam."

Grettir answered, "I must not have less for my horse than a sight of the thrall."

The bonder said it was no boon to see him, for he was unlike any shape of man; "but good methinks is every hour that thou art here."

Now the day goes by, and when men should go to sleep Grettir would not put off his clothes, but lay down on the seat over against the bonder's lock-bed. He had a drugget cloak over him, and wrapped one skirt of it under his feet, and twined the other under his head, and looked out through the head-opening; a seat-beam was before the seat, a very strong one, and against this he set his feet. The door-fittings were all broken from the outer door, but a wrecked door was now bound thereby, and all was fitted up in the wretchedest wise. The panelling which had been before the seat athwart the hall, was all broken away both above and below the cross-beam; all beds had been torn out of place, and an uncouth place it was.

Light burned in the hall through the night; and when the third part of the night was passed, Grettir heard huge din without, and then one went up upon the houses and rode the hall, and drave his heels against the thatch so that every rafter cracked again.

That went on long, and then he came down from the house and went to the door; and as the door opened, Grettir saw that the thrall stretched in his head, which seemed to him monstrously big, and wondrous thick cut.

Glam fared slowly when he came into the door and stretched himself high up under the roof, and turned looking along

the hall, and laid his arms on the tie-beam, and glared inwards over the place. The farmer would not let himself be heard, for he deemed he had had enough, in hearing himself what had gone on outside. Grettir lay quiet, and moved no whit; then Glam saw that some bundle lay on the seat, and therewith he stalked up the hall and griped at the wrapper wondrous hard; but Grettir set his foot against the beam, and moved in no wise; Glam pulled again much harder, but still the wrapper moved not at all; the third time he pulled with both hands so hard, that he drew Grettir upright from the seat; and now they tore the wrapper asunder between them. Grettir goes to Thorhallstead

Glam gazed at the rag he held in his hand, and wondered much who might pull so hard against him; and therewithal Grettir ran under his hands and gripped him round the middle, and bent back his spine as hard as he might, and his mind it was that Glam should shrink thereat; but the thrall lay so hard on Grettir's arms, that he shrank all aback because of Glam's strength.

Then Grettir bore back before him into sundry seats; but the seat-beams were driven out of place, and all was broken that was before them. Glam was fain to get out, but Grettir set his feet against all things that he might; nathless Glam got him dragged from out the hall; there had they a wondrous hard wrestling, because the thrall had a mind to bring him out of the house; but Grettir saw that ill as it was to deal with Glam within doors, yet worse would it be without; therefore he struggled with all his might and main against going out-a-doors.

Now Glam gathered up his strength and knit Grettir towards him when they came to the outer door; but when Grettir saw that he might not set his feet against that, all of a sudden in one rush he drave his hardest against the thrall's breast, and spurned both feet against the half-sunken stone that stood in the threshold of the door; for this the thrall was not ready, for he had been tugging to draw Grettir to him, therefore he reeled aback and spun out against the door, so that his shoulders caught the upper door-case, and

Grettir goes to Thorhall-stead

the roof burst asunder, both rafters and frozen thatch, and therewith he fell open-armed aback out of the house, and Grettir over him.

Bright moonlight was there without, and the drift was broken, now drawn over the moon, now driven from off her; and, even as Glam fell, a cloud was driven from the moon, and Glam glared up against her. And Grettir himself says that by that sight only was he dismayed amidst all that he ever saw.

Then his soul sank within him so, from all these things, both from weariness, and because he had seen Glam turn his eyes so horribly, that he might not draw the short-sword, and lay well-nigh 'twixt home and hell.

But herein was there more fiendish craft in Glam than in most other ghosts, that he spake now in this wise:

"Exceeding eagerly hast thou wrought to meet me, Grettir, but no wonder will it be deemed, though thou gettest no good hap of me; and this must I tell thee, that thou now hast got half the strength and manhood, which was thy lot if thou hadst not met me: now I may not take from thee the strength which thou hast got before this; but that may I rule, that thou shalt never be mightier than now thou art; and nathless art thou mighty enow, and that shall many an one learn. Hitherto hast thou earned fame by thy deeds, but henceforth will wrongs and manslayings fall on thee, and the most part of thy doings will turn to thy woe and ill-hap; an outlaw shalt thou be made, and ever shall it be thy lot to dwell alone abroad; therefore this weird I lay on thee, ever in those days to see these eyes with thine eyes, and thou wilt find it hard to be alone—and that shall drag thee unto death."

Now when the thrall had thus said, the astoniment fell from Grettir that had lain on him, and therewith he drew the short-sword and hewed the head from Glam, and laid it at his thigh.[1]

Then came the farmer out; he had clad himself while

[1] See p. 40.

Glam had his spell going, but he durst come nowhere nigh till Glam had fallen.

Grettir goes to Thorhall-stead

Thorhall praised God therefor, and thanked Grettir well for that he had won this unclean spirit. Then they set to work and burned Glam to cold coals, thereafter they gathered his ashes into the skin of a beast, and dug it down whereas sheep-pastures were fewest, or the ways of men. They walked home thereafter, and by then it had got far on towards day; Grettir laid him down, for he was very stiff: but Thorhall sent to the nearest farm for men, and both showed them and told them how all things had fared.

All men who heard thereof deemed this a deed of great worth, and in those days it was said by all that none in all the land was like to Grettir Asmundson for great heart and prowess.

Thorhall saw off Grettir handsomely, and gave him a good horse and seemly clothes, for those were all torn to pieces that he had worn before; so they parted in friendly wise. Grettir rode thence to the Ridge in Waterdale, and Thorvald received him well, and asked closely about the struggle with Glam. Grettir told them all, and said thereto that he had never had such a trial of strength, so long was their struggle.

Thorvald bade him keep quiet, "Then all will go well with thee, else wilt thou be a man of many troubles."

Grettir said that his temper had been nowise bettered by this, that he was worse to quiet than before, and that he deemed all trouble worse than it was; but that herein he found the greatest change, in that he was become so fearsome a man in the dark, that he durst go nowhither alone after nightfall, for then he seemed to see all kinds of horrors.

And that has fallen since into a proverb, that Glam lends eyes, or gives Glamsight to those who see things nowise as they are.

But Grettir rode home to Biarg when he had done his errands, and sat at home through the winter.

Oxmain's autumn-feast

CHAPTER XXXVI. OF THORBIORN OXMAIN'S AUTUMN-FEAST, AND THE MOCKS OF THORBIORN TARDY.

THORBIORN Oxmain held a great autumn feast, and many men came thither to him, and that was while Grettir fared north to Waterdale in the autumn; Thorbiorn the Tardy was there at the feast, and many things were spoken of there. There the Ramfirthers asked of those dealings of Grettir on the neck the summer before.

Thorbiorn Oxmain told the story right fairly as towards Grettir, and said that Kormak would have got the worst of it, if none had come there to part them.

Then spake Thorbiorn the Tardy, "Both these things are true," said he: "I saw Grettir win no great honour, and I deem withal that fear shot through his heart when we came thereto, and right blithe was he to part, nor did I see him seek for vengeance when Atli's house-carle was slain; therefore do I deem that there is no heart in him if he is not holpen enow."

And thereat Thorbiorn went on gabbling at his most; but many put in a word, and said that this was worthless fooling, and that Grettir would not leave things thus, if he heard that talk.

Nought else befell worth telling of at the feast, and men went home; but much ill-will there was betwixt them that winter, though neither set on other; nor were there other tidings through the winter.

CHAPTER XXXVII. OLAF THE SAINT, KING IN NORWAY; THE SLAYING OF THORBIORN TARDY; GRETTIR GOES TO NORWAY.

EARLY the spring after came out a ship from Norway; and that was before the Thing; these folk knew many things to tell, and first that there was change of rulers in Norway, for Olaf Haraldson was come to be king, and Earl Svein had fled the country in the spring after the fight at Ness. Many noteworthy matters were told of King Olaf,

and this withal, that he received such men in the best of ways who were of prowess in any deeds, and that he made such his men. Olaf the Saint

Thereat were many young men glad, and listed to go abroad, and when Grettir heard the tidings he became much minded to sail out; for he, like others, hoped for honour at the king's hands.

A ship lay in Goose-ere in Eyjafirth, therein Grettir got him a berth and made ready for the voyage, nor had he yet much of faring-goods.

Now Asmund was growing very feeble with eld, and was well-nigh bedridden; he and Asdis had a young son who was called Illugi, and was the hopefullest of men; and, by this time, Atli tended all farming and money-keeping, and this was deemed to better matters, because he was a peaceable and foreseeing man.

Now Grettir went shipward, but in that same ship had Thorbiorn the Tardy taken passage, before folk knew that Grettir would sail therein. Now men would hinder Thorbiorn from sailing in the same ship with Grettir, but Thorbiorn said that he would go for all that. He gat him ready for the voyage out, and was somewhat late thereat, nor did he come to the north to Goose-ere before the ship was ready for sea; and before Thorbiorn fared from the west, Asmund the Grey-haired fell sick and was bedridden.

Now Thorbiorn the Tardy came late one day down to the sand; men were getting ready to go to table, and were washing their hands outside the booths; but when Thorbiorn rode up the lane betwixt the booths, he was greeted and asked for tidings. He made as if there was nought to tell, "Save that I deem that Asmund, the champion of Biarg, is now dead."

Many men said that there where he went, departed a worthy goodman from the world.

"But what brought it about?" said they.

He answered, "Little went to the death of that champion, for in the chamber smoke was he smothered like a dog; nor is there loss therein, for he was grown a dotard."

"Thou speakest marvellously of such a man," said they, "nor would Grettir like thy words well, if he heard them."

"That must I bear," said Thorbiorn, "and higher must Grettir bear the sword than he did last summer at Ramfirth-neck, if I am to tremble at him."

Now Grettir heard full well what Thorbiorn said, and paid no heed thereto while he let his tale run on; but when he had made an end, then spake Grettir,

"That fate I foretell for thee, Tardy," said he, "that thou wilt not die in chamber smoke, yet may be withal thou wilt not die of eld; but it is strangely done to speak scorn of sackless men."

Thorbiorn said, "I have no will to hold in about these things, and methinks thou didst not bear thyself so briskly when we got thee off that time when the men of Meals beat thee like a neat's head."

Then sang Grettir:

"Day by day full over long,
Arrow-dealer, grows thy tongue;
Such a man there is, that thou
Mayst be paid for all words now;
Many a man, who has been fain,
Wound-worm's tower with hands to gain,
With less deeds his death has bought,
Than thou, Tardy-one, hast wrought."

Said Thorbiorn, "About as feigh do I deem myself as before, despite thy squealing."

Grettir answered, "Heretofore my spaedom has not been long-lived, and so shall things go still; now beware if thou wilt, hereafter will no out-look be left."

Therewith Grettir hewed at Thorbiorn, but he swung up his hand, with the mind to ward the stroke from him, but that stroke came on his arm above the wrist, and withal the short-sword drave into his neck so that the head was smitten off.

Then said the chapmen that he was a man of mighty

strokes, and that such should king's men be; and no scathe they deemed it though Thorbiorn were slain, in that he had been both quarrelsome and spiteful. Olaf the Saint

A little after they sailed into the sea, and came in late summer to Norway, south at Hordaland, and then they heard that King Olaf was north at Drontheim; then Grettir took ship in a trading keel to go north therefrom, because he would fain see the king.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. OF THORIR OF GARTH AND HIS SONS; & HOW GRETTIR FETCHED FIRE FOR HIS SHIPMATES.

THERE was a man named Thorir, who lived at Garth in Maindale, he was the son of Skeggi, the son of Botulf. Skeggi had settled Well-wharf up to Wellness; he had to wife Helga, daughter of Thorkel, of Fishbrook; Thorir, his son, was a great chief, and a sea-faring man. He had two sons, one called Thorgeir and one Skeggi; they were both hopeful men, and fully grown in those days. Thorir had been in Norway that summer, when King Olaf came east from England, and got into great friendship with the king, and with Bishop Sigurd as well; and this is a token thereof, that Thorir had had a large ship built in the wood, and prayed Bishop Sigurd to hallow it, and so he did. Thereafter Thorir fared out to Iceland and caused the ship to be broken up, when he grew weary of sailing; but the beaks of the ship he had set up over his outer door, and they were there long afterwards, and were so full of weather wisdom, that the one whistled before a south wind, and the other before a north wind.

But when Thorir knew that King Olaf had got the sole rule over all Norway, he deemed that he had some friendship there to fall back on; then he sent his sons to Norway to meet the king, and was minded that they should become his men. They came there south, late in autumn, and got to themselves a row-barge, and fared north along the land, with the mind to go and meet the king.

Of Thorir of Garth & his sons

They came to a haven south of Stead, and lay there some nights, and kept themselves in good case as to meat and drink, and went not much abroad when the weather was foul.

Now it is to be told that Grettir and his fellows fared north along the land, and often had hard weather, because it was then the beginning of winter; and when they bore down north on Stead, they had much foul weather, with snow and frost, and with exceeding trouble they make land one evening all much worn with wet; so they lay to by a certain dyke, and could thus save their money and goods; the chapmen were hard put to it for the cold, because they could not light any fire, though thereon they deemed well-nigh their life and health lay.

Thus they lay that evening in evil plight; but as the night wore on they saw that a great fire sprang up in the midst of the sound over against there whereas they had come. But when Grettir's shipmates saw the fire, they said one to the other that he would be a happy man who might get it, and they doubted whether they should unmoor the ship, but to all of them there seemed danger in that. Then they had a long talk over it, whether any man was of might enow to fetch that fire.

Grettir gave little heed thereto, but said that such men had been as would not have feared the task. The chapmen said that they were not bettered by what had been, if now there was nought to take to.

"Perchance thou deemest thyself man enough thereto, Grettir," said they, "since thou art called the man of most prowess among the men of Iceland, and thou wottest well enough what our need is."

Grettir answered, "It seems to me no great deed to fetch the fire, but I wot not if ye will reward it according to the prayer of him who does it."

They said, "Why deemest thou us such shameful men as that we should reward that deed but with good?"

Quoth he, "I may try this if so be that ye think much lies on it, but my mind bids me hope to get nought of good thereby."

They said that that should never be, and bade all hail to his words; and thereafter Grettir made ready for swimming, and cast his clothes from off him; of clothes he had on but a cape and sale-cloth breeches; he girt up the cape and tied a bast-rope strongly round his middle, and had with him a cask; then he leaped overboard; he stretched across the sound, and got a-land. Of Thorir of Garth & his sons

There he saw a house stand, and heard therefrom the talk of men, and much clatter, and therewith he turned toward that house.

Now is it to be said of those that were there before, that here were come the sons of Thorir, as is aforesaid; they had lain there many nights, and bided there the falling of the gale, that they might have wind at will to go north, beyond Stead. They had set them down a-drinking, and were twelve men in all; their ship rode in the main haven, and they were at a house of refuge for such men to guest in, as went along the coast.

Much straw had been borne into the house, and there was a great fire on the floor; Grettir burst into the house, and wotted not who was there before; his cape was all over icé when he came a-land, and he himself was wondrous great to behold, even as a troll; now those first comers were exceeding amazed at him, and deemed he must be some evil wight; they smote at him with all things they might lay hold of, and mighty din went on around them; but Grettir put off all blows strongly with his arms, then some smote him with fire-brands, and the fire burst out over all the house, and there-with he got off with the fire and fared back again to his fellows.

They mightily praised his journey and the prowess of it, and said that his like would never be. And now the night wore, and they deemed themselves happy in that they had got the fire.

The next morning the weather was fair; the chapmen woke early and got them ready to depart, and they talked together that now they should meet those who had had the rule of that fire, and wot who they were.

Of Thorir of Garth & his sons

Now they unmoored their ship, and crossed over the sound; there they found no hall, but saw a great heap of ashes, and found therein many bones of men; then they deemed that this house of refuge had been utterly burned up, with all those men who had been therein.

Thereat they asked if Grettir had brought about that ill-hap, and said that it was the greatest misdeed.

Grettir said, that now had come to pass even as he had misdoubted, that they should reward him ill for the fetching of the fire, and that it was ill to help unmanly men.

Grettir got such hurt of this, that the chapmen said, wheresoever they came, that Grettir had burned those men. The news soon got abroad that in that house were lost the aforenamed sons of Thorir of Garth, and their fellows; they then drave Grettir from their ship and would not have him with them; and now he became so ill looked on that scarce anyone would do good to him.

Now he deemed that matters were utterly hopeless, but before all things he would go to meet the king, and so made north to Drontheim. The king was there before him, and knew all or ever Grettir came there, who had been much slandered to the king. And Grettir was some days in the town before he could get to meet the king.

CHAPTER XXXIX. HOW GRETTIR WOULD FAIN BEAR IRON BEFORE THE KING.

NOW on a day when the king sat in council, Grettir went before the king and greeted him well. The king looked at him and said, "Art thou Grettir the Strong?"

He answered, "So have I been called, and for that cause am I come to thee, that I hope from thee deliverance from the evil tale that is laid on me, though I deem that I nowise wrought that deed."

King Olaf said, "Thou art great enough, but I know not what luck thou mayest bear about to cast off this matter from thee; but it is like, indeed, that thou didst not willingly burn the men."

Grettir said he was fain to put from him this slander, if the king thought he might do so; the king bade him tell truthfully, how it had gone betwixt him and those men: Grettir told him all, even as has been said before, and this withal, that they were all alive when he came out with the fire— How Grettir would bear iron

"And now I will offer to free myself in such wise as ye may deem will stand good in law therefor."

Olaf the King said, "We will grant thee to bear iron for this matter if thy luck will have it so."

Grettir liked this exceeding well; and now took to fasting for the iron; and so the time wore on till the day came whereas the trial should come off; then went the king to the church, and the bishop and much folk, for many were eager to have a sight of Grettir, so much as had been told of him.

Then was Grettir led to the church, and when he came thither, many of those who were there before gazed at him and said one to the other, that he was little like to most folk, because of his strength and greatness of growth.

Now, as Grettir went up the church-floor, there started up a lad of ripe growth, wondrous wild of look, and he said to Grettir,

"Marvellous is now the custom in this land, as men are called Christians therein, that ill-doers, and folk riotous, and thieves shall go their ways in peace and become free by trials; yea, and what would the evil man do but save his life while he might? So here now is a misdoer, proven clearly a man of misdeeds, and has burnt sackless men withal, and yet shall he, too, have a trial to free him; ah, a mighty ill custom!"

Therewith he went up to Grettir and pointed finger, and wagged head at him, and called him mermaid's son, and many other ill names.

Grettir grew wroth beyond measure hereat, and could not keep himself in; he lifted up his fist, and smote the lad under the ear, so that forthwith he fell down stunned, but some say that he was slain there and then. None seemed to know whence that lad came or what became of him, but men are mostly

minded to think, that it was some unclean spirit, sent thither for Grettir's hurt.

How Grettir would bear iron

Now a great clamour rose in the church, and it was told the king, "He who should bear the iron is smiting all about him;" then King Olaf went down the church, and saw what was going on, and spake:

"A most unlucky man art thou," said he, "that now the trial should not be, as ready as all things were thereto, nor will it be easy to deal with thine ill-luck."

Grettir answered, "I was minded that I should have gained more honour from thee, Lord, for the sake of my kin, than now seems like to be;" and he told withal how men were faring to King Olaf,[1] as was said afore, "and now I am fain," said he, "that thou wouldest take me to thee; thou hast here many men with thee, who will not be deemed more like men-at-arms than I."

"That see I well," said the king, "that few men are like unto thee for strength and stoutness of heart, but thou art far too luckless a man to abide with us: now shalt thou go in peace for me, wheresoever thou wilt, the winter long, but next summer go thou out to Iceland, for there will it be thy fate to leave thy bones."

Grettir answered, "First would I put from me this affair of the burning, if I might, for I did not the deed willingly."

"It is most like," said the king; "but yet, because the trial is now come to nought for thy heedlessness' sake, thou wilt not get this charge cast from thee more than now it is, *For ill-heed still to ill doth lead*, and if ever man has been cursed, of all men must thou have been."

So Grettir dwelt a while in the town thereafter, but dealt no more with the king than has been told.

Then he fared into the south country, and was minded east for Tunsberg, to find Thorstein Dromund, his brother, and there is nought told of his travels till he came east to Jadar.

[1] See p. 93.

CHAPTER XL. OF GRETTIR AND SNŒKOLL.

Of Grettir and Snœkoll

AT Yule came Grettir to a bonder who was called Einar, he was a rich man, and was married and had one daughter of marriageable age, who was called Gyrid; she was a fair woman, and was deemed a right good match; Einar bade Grettir abide with him through Yule, and that proffer he took.

Then was it the wont far and wide in Norway that woodmen and misdoers would break out of the woods and challenge men for their women, or they took away men's goods with violence, whereas they had not much help of men.

Now so it befell here, that one day in Yule there came to Einar the bonder many ill-doers together, and he was called Snœkoll who was the head of them, and a great bearserk he was. He challenged goodman Einar to give up his daughter, or to defend her, if he thought himself man enough thereto; but the bonder was then past his youth, and was no man for fighting; he deemed he had a great trouble on his hands, and asked Grettir, in a whisper, what rede he would give thereto: "Since thou art called a famous man." Grettir bade him say yea to those things alone, which he thought of no shame to him.

The bearserk sat on his horse, and had a helm on his head, but the cheek-pieces were not made fast; he had an iron-rimmed shield before him, and went on in the most monstrous wise.

Now he said to the bonder, "Make one or other choice speedily, or what counsel is that big churl giving thee who stands there before thee; is it not so that he will play with me?"

Grettir said, "We are about equal herein, the bonder and I, for neither of us is skilled in arms."

Snœkoll said, "Ye will both of you be somewhat afraid to deal with me, if I grow wroth."

"*That is known when it is tried*," said Grettir.

Now the bearserk saw that there was some edging out of the matter going on, and he began to roar aloud, and bit the

Of Grettir and Snœkoll

rim of his shield, and thrust it up into his mouth, and gaped over the corner of his shield, and went on very madly. Grettir took a sweep along over the field, and when he came alongside of the bearserk's horse, sent up his foot under the tail of the shield so hard, that the shield went up into the mouth of him, and his throat was riven asunder, and his jaws fell down on his breast. Then he wrought so that, all in one rush, he caught hold of the helmet with his left hand, and swept the viking off his horse; and with the other hand drew the short-sword that he was girt withal, and drave it at his neck, so that off the head flew. But when Snœkoll's fellows saw that, they fled, each his own way, and Grettir had no mind to follow, for he saw there was no heart in them.

The bonder thanked him well for his work and many other men too; and that deed was deemed to have been wrought both swiftly and hardily.

Grettir was there through Yule, and the farmer saw him off handsomely: then he went east to Tunsberg, and met his brother Thorstein; he received Grettir fondly, and asked of his travels and how he won the bearserk. Then Grettir sang a stave:

"There the shield that men doth save
Mighty spurn with foot I gave.
Snœkoll's throat it smote aright,
The fierce follower of the fight,
And by mighty dint of it
Were the tofts of tooth-hedge split;
The strong spear-walk's iron rim,
Tore a-down the jaws of him."

Thorstein said, "Deft wouldst thou be at many things, kinsman, if mishaps went not therewith."

Grettir answered, "*Deeds done will be told of.*"

CHAPTER XLI. OF THORSTEIN DROMUND'S ARMS, AND WHAT HE DEEMED THEY MIGHT DO.

Thorstein Dromund's arms

NOW Grettir was with Thorstein for the rest of the winter and on into the spring; and it befell one morning, as those brothers, Thorstein and Grettir, lay in their sleeping-loft, that Grettir had laid his arms outside the bed-clothes; and Thorstein was awake and saw it. Now Grettir woke up a little after, and then spake Thorstein:

"I have seen thine arms, kinsman," said he, "and I deem it nowise wonderful, though thy strokes fall heavy on many, for no man's arms have I seen like thine."

"Thou mayst know well enough," said Grettir, "that I should not have brought such things to pass as I have wrought, if I were not well knit."

"Better should I deem it," said Thorstein, "if they were slenderer and somewhat luckier withal."

Grettir said, "True it is, as folk say, *No man makes himself;* but let me see thine arms," said he.

Thorstein did so; he was the longest and gauntest of men; and Grettir laughed, and said,

"No need to look at that longer; hooked together are the ribs in thee; nor, methinks, have I ever seen such tongs as thou bearest about, and I deem thee to be scarce of a woman's strength."

"That may be," said Thorstein; "yet shalt thou know that these same thin arms shall avenge thee, else shalt thou never be avenged; who may know what shall be, when all is over and done?"

No more is told of their talk together; the spring wore on, and Grettir took ship in the summer. The brothers parted in friendship, and saw each other never after.

Of the death of Asmund the Grey-haired

CHAPTER XLII. OF THE DEATH OF ASMUND THE GREY-HAIRED.

NOW must the tale be taken up where it was left before, for Thorbiorn Oxmain heard how Thorbiorn Tardy was slain, as aforesaid, and broke out into great wrath, and said it would please him well that *now this and now that should have strokes in his garth.*

Asmund the Grey-haired lay long sick that summer, and when he thought his ailings drew closer on him, he called to him his kin, and said that it was his will, that Atli should have charge of all his goods after his day.

"But my mind misgives me," said Asmund, "that thou mayst scarce sit quiet because of the iniquity of men, and I would that all ye of my kin should help him to the uttermost; but of Grettir nought can I say, for methinks overmuch on a whirling wheel his life turns; and though he be a mighty man, yet I fear me that he will have to heed his own troubles more than the helping of his kin: but Illugi, though he be young, yet shall he become a man of prowess, if he keep himself whole."

So, when Asmund had settled matters about his sons as he would, his sickness lay hard on him, and in a little while he died, and was laid in earth at Biarg; for there had he let make a church; but his death his neighbours deemed a great loss.

Now Atli became a mighty bonder, and had many with him, and was a great gatherer of household-stuff. When the summer was far gone, he went out to Snowfellness to get him stockfish. He drave many horses, and rode from home to Meals in Ramfirth to Gamli his brother-in-law; and on this journey rode with him Grim Thorhallson, Gamli's brother, and another man withal. They rode west to Hawkdale Pass, and so on, as the road lay west to Ness: there they bought much stockfish, and loaded seven horses therewith, and turned homeward when they were ready.

CHAPTER XLIII. THE ONSET ON ATLI AT THE PASS AND THE SLAYING OF GUNNAR AND THORGEIR.

The onset on Atli at the Pass

THORBIORN Oxmain heard that Atli and Grim were on a journey from home, and there were with him the sons of Thorir from the Pass, Gunnar and Thorgeir. Now Thorbiorn envied Atli for his many friendships, and therefore he egged on the two brothers, the sons of Thorir, to waylay Atli as he came back from the outer ness. Then they rode home to the Pass, and abode there till Atli and his fellows went by with their train; but when they came as far as the homestead at the Pass, their riding was seen, and those brothers brake out swiftly with their house-carles and rode after them; but when Atli and his folk saw their faring, Atli bade them take the loads from the horses, "for perchance they will give me atonement for my house-carle, whom Gunnar slew last summer. Let us not begin the work, but defend ourselves if they be first to raise strife with us."

Now the brothers came up and leaped off their horses. Atli welcomed them, and asked for tidings: "Perchance, Gunnar, thou wilt give me some atonement for my house-carle."

Gunnar answered, "Something else is your due, men of Biarg, than that I should lay down aught good therefor; yea, atonement is due withal for the slaying of Thorbiorn, whom Grettir slew."

"It is not for me to answer thereto," said Atli; "nor art thou a suitor in that case."

Gunnar said he would stand in that stead none-the-less. "Come, let us set on them, and make much of it, that Grettir is not nigh them now."

Then they ran at Atli, eight of them altogether, but Atli and his folk were six.

Atli went before his men, and drew the sword, Jokul's gift, which Grettir had given him.

Then said Thorgeir, "Many like ways have those who deem themselves good; high aloft did Grettir bear his short-sword last summer on the Ramfirth-neck."

The onset on Atli at the Pass

Atli answered, "Yea, he is more wont to deal in great deeds than I."

Thereafter they fought; Gunnar set on Atli exceeding fiercely, and was of the maddest; and when they had fought awhile, Atli said,

"No fame there is in thus killing workmen each for the other; more seeming it is that we ourselves play together, for never have I fought with weapons till now."

Gunnar would not have it so, but Atli bade his house-carles look to the burdens; "But I will see what these will do herein."

Then he went forward so mightily that Gunnar and his folk shrunk back before him, and he slew two of the men of those brothers, and thereafter turned to meet Gunnar, and smote at him, so that the shield was cleft asunder almost below the handle, and the stroke fell on his leg below the knee, and then he smote at him again, and that was his bane.

Now is it to be told of Grim Thorhallson that he went against Thorgeir, and they strove together long, for each was a hardy man. Thorgeir saw the fall of his brother Gunnar, and was fain to draw off. Grim ran after him, and followed him till Thorgeir stumbled, and fell face foremost; then Grim smote at him with an axe betwixt the shoulders, so that it stood deep sunken therein.

Then they gave peace to three of their followers who were left; and thereafter they bound up their wounds, and laid the burdens on the horses, and then fared home, and made these man-slayings known.

Atli sat at home with many men through the winter. Thorbiorn Oxmain took these doings exceedingly ill, but could do naught therein because Atli was a man well befriended. Grim was with him through the winter, and Gamli, his brother-in-law; and there was Glum, son of Uspak, another kinsman-in-law of his, who at that time dwelt at Ere in Bitra. They had many men dwelling at Biarg, and great mirth was thereat through the winter.

CHAPTER XLIV. THE SUIT FOR THE SLAYING OF THE SONS OF THORIR OF THE PASS.

The suit for the slaying

THORBIORN Oxmain took on himself the suit for the slaying of the sons of Thorir of the Pass. He made ready a suit against Grim and Atli, but they set forth for their defence onset and attack, to make those brothers fall unatoned. The suit was brought to the Hunawater Thing, and men came thronging to both sides. Atli had good help because he was exceeding strong of kin.

Now the friends of both stood forth and talked of peace, and all said that Atli's ways were good, a peaceful man, but stout in danger none-the-less.

Now Thorbiorn deemed that by nought would his honour be served better than by taking the peace offered. Atli laid down before-hand that he would have neither district outlawry nor banishment.

Then were men chosen for the judges: Thorvald, son of Asgeir, on Atli's side, and on Thorbiorn's, Solvi the Proud, who was the son of Asbrand, the son of Thorbrand, the son of Harald Ring, who had settled all Waterness from the Foreland up to Bond-maids River on the west, but on the east all up to Cross-river, and there right across to Berg-ridge, and all on that side of the Bergs down to the sea: this Solvi was a man of great stateliness and a wise man, therefore Thorbiorn chose him to be judge on his behoof.

Now they set forth their judgment, that half-fines should be paid for the sons of Thorir, but half fell away because of the onslaught and attack, and attempt on Atli's life; the slaying of Atli's house-carle, who was slain on Ramfirth-neck, and the slaying of those twain who fell with the sons of Thorir were set off one against the other. Grim Thorhallson should leave dwelling in the district, but Atli alone should pay the money atonement.

This peace pleased Atli much, but Thorbiorn misliked it, but they parted appeased, as far as words went; howsoever it fell from Thorbiorn that their dealings would not be made an end of yet, if things went as he would.

The suit for the slaying

But Atli rode home from the Thing, and thanked Thorvald well for his aid. Grim Thorhallson went south to Burgfirth, and dwelt at Gilsbank, and was a great bonder.

CHAPTER XLV. OF THE SLAYING OF ATLI ASMUNDSON.

THERE was a man with Thorbiorn Oxmain who was called Ali; he was a house-carle, a somewhat lazy and unruly man.

Thorbiorn bade him work harder, or he would beat him. Ali said he had no list thereto, and was beyond measure worrying. Thorbiorn would not abide it, and drave him under him, and handled him hardly. Then Ali went off from his service, and fared over the Neck to Midfirth, and made no stay till he came to Biarg. Atli was at home, and asked whither he went. He said that he sought service.

"Art thou not Thorbiorn's workman?" said Atli.

"That did not go off so pleasantly," said Ali; "I was not there long, and evil I deemed it while I was there, and we parted, so that I deemed his song about my throat nowise sweet; and I will go to dwell there no more, whatso else may hap to me; and true it is that much unlike ye are in the luck ye have with servants, and now I would fain work with thee if I might have the choice."

Atli answered, "Enough have I of workmen, though I reach not out to Thorbiorn's hands for such men as he has hired, and methinks there is no gain in thee, so go back to him."

Ali said, "Thither I go not of my own free-will."

And now he dwells there awhile; but one morning he went out to work with Atli's house-carles, and worked so that his hands were everywhere, and thus he went on till far into summer. Atli said nought to him, but bade give him meat, for he liked his working well.

Now Thorbiorn hears that Ali is at Biarg; then he rode to Biarg with two men, and called out Atli to talk with him. Atli went out and welcomed him.

Thorbiorn said, "Still wilt thou take up afresh ill-will against me, and trouble me, Atli. Why hast thou taken my workman? Wrongfully is this done." Of the slaying of Atli

Atli answered, "It is not proven to me that he is thy workman, nor will I withhold him from thee, if thou showest proofs thereof, yet am I loth to drag him out of my house."

"Thou must have thy will now," said Thorbiorn; "but I claim the man, and forbid him to work here; and I will come again another time, and I know not if we shall then part better friends than now."

Atli said, "I shall abide at home, and take what may come to hand."

Then Thorbiorn rode home; but when the workmen come home in the evening, Atli tells all the talk betwixt him and Thorbiorn, and bids Ali go his way, and said he should not abide there longer.

Ali answered, "True is the old saw, *over-praised and first to fail*. I deemed not that thou wouldst drive me away after I had toiled here all the summer enough to break my heart, and I hoped that thou wouldst stand up for me somehow; but this is the way of you, though ye look as if good might be hoped from you. I shall be beaten here before thine eyes if thou givest me not some defence or help."

Atli altered his mind at this talk of his, and had no heart now to drive him away from him.

Now the time wore, till men began hay-harvest, and one day, somewhat before midsummer, Thorbiorn Oxmain rode to Biarg; he was so attired that he had a helm on his head, and was girt with a sword, and had a spear in his hand. A barbed spear it was, and the barbs were broad.

It was wet abroad that day. Atli had sent his house-carles to the mowing, but some of them were north at Horn a-fishing. Atli was at home, and few other men.

Thorbiorn came there about high-noon; alone he was, and rode up to the outer door; the door was locked, and no men were abroad. Thorbiorn smote on the door, and then drew back behind the houses, so that none might see him

Of the slaying of Atli

from the door. The home-folk heard that the door was knocked at, and a woman went out. Thorbiorn had an inkling of the woman, and would not let himself be seen, for he had a mind to do something else.

Now the woman went into the chamber, and Atli asked who was come there. She said, "I have seen nought stirring abroad." And even as they spake Thorbiorn let drive a great stroke on the door.

Then said Atli, "This one would see me, and he must have some errand with me, whatever may be the gain thereof to me."

Then he went forth and out of the door, and saw no one without. Exceeding wet it was, therefore he went not out, but laid a hand on either door-post, and so peered about him.

In that point of time Thorbiorn swung round before the door, and thrust the spear with both hands amidst of Atli, so that it pierced him through.

Then said Atli, when he got the thrust, "*Broad spears are about now*," says he, and fell forward over the threshold.

Then came out women who had been in the chamber, and saw that Atli was dead. By then was Thorbiorn on horseback, and he gave out the slaying as having been done by his hand, and thereafter rode home.

The goodwife Asdis sent for her men, and Atli's corpse was laid out, and he was buried beside his father. Great mourning folk made for his death, for he had been a wise man, and of many friends.

No weregild came for the slaying of Atli, nor did any claim atonement for him, because Grettir had the blood-suit to take up if he should come out; so these matters stood still for that summer. Thorbiorn was little thanked for that deed of his; but he sat at peace in his homestead.

CHAPTER XLVI. GRETTIR OUTLAWED AT THE THING AT THE SUIT OF THORIR OF GARTH.

Grettir outlawed

THIS summer, whereof the tale was telling e'en now, a ship came out to Goose-ere before the Thing. Then was the news told of Grettir's travels, and therewithal men spake of that house-burning; and at that story was Thorir of Garth mad wroth, and deemed that there whereas Grettir was he had to look for vengeance for his sons. He rode with many men and set forth at the Thing the case for the burning, but men deemed they knew nought to say therein, while there was none to answer.

Thorir said that he would have nought, but that Grettir should be made an outlaw throughout the land for such misdeeds.

Then answered Skapti the Lawman, "Surely an ill deed it is, if things are as is said; but a tale is half told if one man tells it, for most folk are readiest to bring their stories to the worser side when there are two ways of telling them; now, therefore, I shall not give my word that Grettir be made guilty for this that has been done."

Now Thorir was a man of might in his district and a great chief, and well befriended of many great men; and he pushed on matters so hard that nought could avail to acquit Grettir; and so this Thorir made Grettir an outlaw throughout all the land, and was ever thenceforth the heaviest of all his foes, as things would oft show.

Now he put a price on his head, as was wont to be done with other wood-folk, and thereafter rode home.

Many men got saying that this was done rather by the high hand than according to law; but so it stood as it was done; and now nought else happed to tell of till past midsummer.

Grettir comes out to Iceland

CHAPTER XLVII. GRETTIR COMES OUT TO ICELAND AGAIN.

WHEN summer was far spent came Grettir Asmundson out to Whiteriver in Burgfirth; folk went down to the ship from thereabout, and these tidings came all at once to Grettir; the first, that his father was dead, the second, that his brother was slain, the third, that he himself was made an outlaw throughout all the land. Then sang Grettir this stave:

"Heavy tidings thick and fast
On the singer now are cast;
My father dead, my brother dead,
A price set upon my head;
Yet, O grove of Hedin's maid,
May these things one day be paid;
Yea upon another morn
Others may be more forlorn."

So men say that Grettir changed nowise at these tidings, but was even as merry as before.

Now he abode with the ship awhile, because he could get no horse to his mind. But there was a man called Svein, who dwelt at Bank up from Thingness; he was a good bonder and a merry man, and often sang such songs as were gamesome to hear; he had a mare black to behold, the swiftest of all horses, and her Svein called Saddle-fair.

Now Grettir went one night away from the wolds, but he would not that the chapmen should be ware of his ways; he got a black cape, and threw it over his clothes, and so was disguised; he went up past Thingness, and so up to Bank, and by then it was daylight. He saw a black horse against the home-field and went up to it, and laid bridle on it, leapt on the back of it, and rode up along White-river, and below Bye up to Flokedale River, and then up the tracks above Kalfness; the workmen at Bank got up now and told the bonder of the man who had got on his mare; he got up and laughed, and sang:

"One that helm-fire well can wield
Rode off from my well-fenced field,
Helm-stalk stole away from me
Saddle-fair, the swift to see;
Certes, more great deeds this Frey
Yet shall do in such-like way
As this was done; I deem him then
Most overbold and rash of men."

Grettir comes out to Iceland

Then he took horse and rode after him; Grettir rode on till he came up to the homestead at Kropp; there he met a man called Hall, who said that he was going down to the ship at the Wolds; Grettir sang a stave:

"In broad-peopled lands say thou
That thou sawest even now
Unto Kropp-farm's gate anigh,
Saddle-fair and Elm-stalk high;
That thou sawest stiff on steed
(Get thee gone at greatest speed),
One who loveth game and play
Clad in cape of black to-day."

Then they part, and Hall went down the track and all the way down to Kalfness, before Svein met him; they greeted one another hastily, then sang Svein:

"Sawest thou him who did me harm
On my horse by yonder farm?
Even such an one was he,
Sluggish yet a thief to see;
From the neighbours presently
Doom of thief shall he abye
And a blue skin shall he wear,
If his back I come anear."

"That thou mayst yet do," said Hall, "I saw that man who said that he rode on Saddle-fair, and bade me tell it over

Grettir comes out to Iceland

the peopled lands and settlements; great of growth he was, and was clad in a black cape."

"He deems he has something to fall back on," said the bonder, "but I shall ride after him and find out who he is."

Now Grettir came to Deildar-Tongue, and there was a woman without the door; Grettir went up to talk to her, and sang this stave:

"Say to guard of deep-sea's flame
That here worm-land's haunter came;
Well-born goddess of red gold,
Thus let gamesome rhyme be told:
'Giver forth of Odin's mead,
Of thy black mare have I need;
For to Gilsbank will I ride,
Meed of my rash words to bide.'"

The woman learned this song, and thereafter Grettir rode on his way; Svein came there a little after, and she was not yet gone in, and as he came he sang this:

"What foreteller of spear-shower
E'en within this nigh-passed hour,
Swift through the rough weather rode
Past the gate of this abode?
He, the hound-eyed reckless one,
By all good deeds left alone,
Surely long upon this day
From my hands will flee away."

Then she told him what she had been bidden to; he thought over the ditty, and said, "It is not unlike that he will be no man to play with; natheless, I will find him out."

Now he rode along the peopled lands, and each man ever saw the other's riding; and the weather was both squally and wet.

Grettir came to Gilsbank that day, and when Grim Thorhallson knew thereof, he welcomed him with great joy, and bade him abide with him. This Grettir agreed to; then he

let loose Saddle-fair, and told Grim how she had been come by. Therewith came Svein, and leapt from his horse, and saw his own mare, and sang this withal:

Grettir comes out to Iceland

"Who rode on my mare away?
What is that which thou wilt pay?
Who a greater theft has seen?
What does the cowl-covered mean?"

Grettir by then had doft his wet clothes, and he heard the stave, and answered:

"I did ride thy mare to Grim
(Thou art feeble weighed with him),
Little will I pay to thee,
Yet good fellows let us be."

"Well, so be it then," said the farmer, "and the ride is well paid for."

Then each sang his own songs, and Grettir said he had no fault to find though he failed to hold his own; the bonder was there that night, and the twain of them together, and great game they made of this; and they called all this Saddle-fair's lays. Next morning the bonder rode home, and he and Grettir parted good friends.

Now Grim told Grettir of many things from the north and Midfirth, that had befallen while he was abroad, and this withal, that Atli was unatoned, and how that Thorbiorn Oxmain waxed so great, and was so high-handed, that it was not sure that goodwife Asdis might abide at Biarg if matters still went so.

Grettir abode but few nights with Grim, for he was fain that no news should go before him north over the Heaths. Grim bade him come thither if he should have any need of safeguard.

"Yet shall I shun being made guilty in law for the harbouring of thee."

Grettir said he did well. "But it is more like that later on I may need thy good deed more."

Grettir comes out to Iceland

Now Grettir rode north over Twodaysway, and so to Biarg, and came there in the dead of night, when all folk were asleep save his mother. He went in by the back of the house and through a door that was there, for the ways of the house were well known to him, and came to the hall, and got to his mother's bed, and groped about before him.

She asked who was there, and Grettir told her; then she sat up and kissed him, and sighed withal heavily, and spake, "Be welcome, son," she said, "but my joyance in my sons is slipping from me; for he is slain who was of most avail, and thou art made an outlaw and a guilty man, and the third is so young, that he may do nought for me."

"An old saw it is," said Grettir, "*Even so shall bale be bettered, by biding greater bale;* but there are more things to be thought of by men than money atonements alone, and most like it is that Atli will be avenged; but as to things that may fall to me, many must even take their lot at my hand in dealing with me, and like it as they may."

She said that was not unlike. And now Grettir was there a while with the knowledge of few folk; and he had news of the doings of the folk of the country-side; and men knew not that Grettir was come into Midfirth: but he heard that Thorbiorn Oxmain was at home with few men; and that was after the home-field hay-harvest.

CHAPTER XLVIII. THE SLAYING OF THORBIORN OXMAIN.

ON a fair day Grettir rode west over the Necks to Thorodstead, and came there about noon, and knocked at the door; women came out and welcomed him, but knew him not; he asked for Thorbiorn, but they said he was gone to the meadow to bind hay, and with him his son of sixteen winters, who was called Arnor; for Thorbiorn was a very busy man, and well-nigh never idle.

So when Grettir knew this, he bade them well betide, and went his way on the road toward Reeks, there a marsh

stretches down from the hill-side, and on it was much grass to mow, and much hay had Thorbiorn made there, and now it was fully dry, and he was minded to bind it up for home, he and the lad with him, but a woman did the raking. The slaying of Oxmain

Now Grettir rode from below up into the field, but the father and son were higher up, and had bound one load, and were now at another; Thorbiorn had set his shield and sword against the load, and the lad had a hand-axe beside him.

Now Thorbiorn saw a man coming, and said to the lad, "Yonder is a man riding toward us, let us leave binding the hay, and know what he will with us."

So did they, and Grettir leapt off his horse; he had a helm on his head, and was girt with the short-sword, and bore a great spear in his hand, a spear without barbs, and the socket inlaid with silver. Now he sat down and knocked out the socket-nail, because he would not that Thorbiorn should cast the spear back.

Then said Thorbiorn, "He is a big man, and no man in field know I, if that is not Grettir Asmundson, and he must needs think he has enough against us; so let us meet him sharply, and let him see no signs of failing in us. We shall deal cunningly; for I will go against him in front, and take thou heed how matters go betwixt us; for I will trust myself against any man if I have one alone to meet; but do thou go behind him, and drive the axe at him with both hands a-twixt his shoulders; thou needest not fear that he will do thee hurt, as his back will be turned to thee."

Neither Thorbiorn nor his son had a helm.

Now Grettir got into the mead, and when he came within spear-throw of them, he cast his spear at Thorbiorn, but the head was looser on the shaft than he deemed it would be, and it swerved in its flight, and fell down from the shaft to the earth: then Thorbiorn took his shield, and put it before him, but drew his sword and went against Grettir when he knew him; then Grettir drew his short-sword, and turned about somewhat, so that he saw how the lad stood at his back, wherefore he kept himself free to move here or there, till he

The slaying of Oxmain

saw that the lad was come within reach of him, and therewith he raised the short-sword high aloft, and sent it back against Arnor's head so mightily that the skull was shattered, and that was his bane. Then Thorbiorn ran against Grettir and smote at him, but he thrust forth his buckler with his left hand, and put the blow from him, and smote with the short-sword withal, and cleft the shield of Thorbiorn, and the short-sword smote so hard into his head that it went even unto the brain, and he fell dead to earth beneath that stroke, nor did Grettir give him any other wound.

Then he sought for his spear-head, and found it not; so he went to his horse and rode out to Reeks, and there told of the slayings. Withal the woman who was in the meadow saw the slayings, and ran home full of fear, and said that Thorbiorn was slain, and his son both; this took those of the house utterly unawares, for they knew nought of Grettir's travelling. So were men sent for to the next homestead, and soon came many folk, and brought the bodies to church. Thorod Drapa-stump took up the blood-suit for these slayings and had folk a-field forthwith.

But Grettir rode home to Biarg, and found his mother, and told her what had happed; and she was glad thereat, and said that now he got to be like unto the Waterdale kin. "Yet will this be the root and stem of thine outlawry, and I know for sooth that thou mayest not abide here long because of the kin of Thorbiorn; but now may they know that thou mayest be angered."

Grettir sang this stave thereupon:

"Giant's friend fell dead to earth
On the grass of Wether-firth,
No fierce fighting would avail
Oxmain in the Odin's gale.
So, and in no other wise,
Has been paid a fitting price
For that Atli, who of yore,
Lay dead-slain a-nigh his door."

Goodwife Asdis said that was true, "But I know not what rede thou art minded to take?" The slaying of Oxmain

Grettir said he would seek help of his friends and kin in the west; "But on thee shall no trouble fall for my sake," said he.

So he made ready to go, and mother and son parted in love; but first he went to Meals in Ramfirth, and told Gamli his brother-in-law all, even as it had happed, concerning the slaying of Thorbiorn.

Gamli told him he must needs depart from Ramfirth while Thorbiorn's kin had their folk about; "But our aid in the suit for Atli's slaying we shall yield thee as we may."

So thereafter Grettir rode west over Laxdale-heath, and stayed not till he came to Liarskogar to Thorstein Kuggson, where he dwelt long that autumn.

CHAPTER XLIX. THE GATHERING TO AVENGE THORBIORN OXMAIN.

THOROD Drapa-stump sought tidings of this who might have slain Thorbiorn and his son, and when he came to Reeks, it was told him that Grettir had been there and given out the slayings as from his hand. Now, Thorod deemed he saw how things had come to pass; so he went to Biarg, and there found many folk, but he asked if Grettir were there.

The goodwife said he had ridden away, and that she would not slip him into hiding-places if he were there.

"Now ye will be well pleased that matters have so been wrought; nor was the slaying of Atli over-avenged, though this was paid for it. Ye asked not then what grief of heart I had; and now, too, it is well that things are even so."

Therewith they rode home, and found it not easy to do aught therein.

Now that spear-head which Grettir lost was not found till within the memory of men living now; it was found in the latter days of Sturla Thordson the Lawman, and in that marsh where Thorbiorn fell, which is now called Spear-mead; and

The gathering to avenge Oxmain

that sign men have to show that Thorbiorn was slain there, though in some places it is said that he was slain on Midfit.

Thorod and his kin heard that Grettir abode at Liarskogar; then they gathered men, and were minded to go thither; but when Gamli of Meals was ware thereof, he made Thorstein and Grettir sure of the farings of the Ramfirthers; and when Thorstein knew it, he sent Grettir in to Tongue to Snorri Godi, for then there was no strife between them, and Thorstein gave that counsel to Grettir that he should pray Snorri the Godi for his watch and ward; but if he would not grant it, he bade Grettir go west to Reek-knolls to Thorgils Arison, "and he will take thee to him through this winter, and keep within the Westfirths till these matters are settled."

Grettir said he would take good heed to his counsels; then he rode into Tongue, and found Snorri the Godi, and talked with him, and prayed him to take him in.

Snorri answered, "I grow an old man now, and loth am I to harbour outlawed men if no need drive me thereto. What has come to pass that the elder put thee off from him?"

Grettir said that Thorstein had often done well to him; "But more shall I need than him alone, if things are to go well."

Said Snorri, "My good word I shall put in for thee if that may avail thee aught, but in some other place than with me must thou seek a dwelling."

With these words they parted, and Grettir turned west to Reekness; the Ramfirthers with their band got as far as Samstead, and there they heard that Grettir had departed from Liarskogar, and thereat they went back home.

CHAPTER L. GRETTIR AND THE FOSTER-BROTHERS AT REEK-KNOLLS.

Grettir at Reek-knolls

NOW Grettir came to Reek-knolls about winter-nights, and prayed Thorgils for winter abode; Thorgils said, that for him as for other free men meat was ready; "but the fare of guests here is nowise choice." Grettir said he was not nice about that.

"There is yet another thing here for thy trouble," said Thorgils: "Men are minded to harbour here, who are deemed somewhat hard to keep quiet, even as those foster-brothers, Thorgeir and Thormod; I wot not how meet it may be for you to be together; but their dwelling shall ever be here if they will it so: now mayst thou abide here if thou wilt, but I will not have it that either of you make strife with the other."

Grettir said he would not be the first to raise strife with any man, and so much the less as the bonder's will was such.

A little after came those foster-brothers home; things went not merrily betwixt Thorgeir and Grettir, but Thormod bore himself well. Goodman Thorgils said to the foster-brothers even as he had said to Grettir; and of such worth they held him, that neither cast an untoward word at the other although their minds went nowise the same way; and so wore the early winter.

Now men say that Thorgils owned those isles, which are called Olaf's-isles, and lie out in the firth a sea-mile and a half off Reekness; there had bonder Thorgils a good ox that he might not fetch home in the autumn; and he was ever saying that he would fain have him against Yule. Now, one day those foster-brothers got ready to seek the ox, if a third man could be gotten to their aid: Grettir offered to go with them, and they were well pleased thereat; they went, the three of them, in a ten-oared boat: the weather was cold, and the wind shifting from the north, and the craft lay up on Whaleshead-holm.

Now they sail out, and somewhat the wind got up, but they came to the isle and got hold of the ox; then asked Grettir which they would do, bear the ox aboard or keep hold of the

Grettir at Reek-knolls

craft, because the surf at the isle was great; then they bade him hold the boat; so he stood amidships on that side which looked from shore, and the sea took him up to the shoulder-blades, yet he held her so that she moved nowise: but Thorgeir took the ox behind and Thormod before, and so hove it down to the boat; then they sat down to row, and Thormod rowed in the bows, Thorgeir amidships, and Grettir aft, and therewith they made out into the open bay; but when they came off Goat-rock, a squall caught them, then said Thorgeir, "The stern is fain to lag behind."

Then said Grettir, "The stern will not be left if the rowing afore be good."

Thereat Thorgeir fell to rowing so hard that both the tholes were broken: then said he, "Row on, Grettir, while I mend the thole-pins."

Then Grettir pulled mightily while Thorgeir did his mending, but when Thorgeir took to rowing again, the oars had got so worn that Grettir shook them asunder on the gunwale.

"Better," quoth Thormod, "to row less and break nought."

Then Grettir caught up two unshapen oar beams that lay in the boat and bored large holes in the gunwales, and rowed withal so mightily that every beam creaked, but whereas the craft was good, and the men somewhat of the brisker sort, they reached Whaleshead-holm.

Then Grettir asked whether they would rather go home with the ox or haul up the boat; they chose to haul up the boat, and hauled it up with all the sea that was in it, and all the ice, for it was much covered with icicles: but Grettir led home the ox, and exceeding stiff in tow he was, and very fat, and he grew very weary, and when they came up below Titling-stead could go no more.

The foster-brothers went up to the house, for neither would help the other in his allotted work; Thorgils asked after Grettir, but they told him where they had parted; then he sent men to meet him, and when they came down to Cave-

knolls they saw how there came towards them a man with a neat on his back, and lo, there was Grettir come, bearing the ox: then all men wondered at his great might. Grettir at Reek-knolls

Now Thorgeir got very envious of Grettir's strength, and one day somewhat after Yule, Grettir went alone to bathe; Thorgeir knew thereof, and said to Thormod, "Let us go on now, and try how Grettir will start if I set on him as he comes from his bathing."

"That is not my mind," said Thormod, "and no good wilt thou get from him."

"I will go though," says Thorgeir; and therewith he went down to the slope, and bore aloft an axe.

By then was Grettir walking up from the bath, and when they met, Thorgeir said; "Is it true, Grettir," says he, "that thou hast said so much as that thou wouldst never run before one man?"

"That I know not for sure," said Grettir, "yet but a little way have I run before thee."

Thorgeir raised aloft the axe, but therewith Grettir ran in under Thorgeir and gave him an exceeding great fall: then said Thorgeir to Thormod, "Wilt thou stand by and see this fiend drive me down under him?"

Thormod caught hold of Grettir's feet, and was minded to pull him off from Thorgeir, but could do nought thereat: he was girt with a short-sword and was going to draw it, when goodman Thorgils came up and bade them be quiet and have nought to do with Grettir.

So did they and turned it all to game, and no more is told of their dealings; and men thought Thorgils had great luck in that he kept such reckless men in good peace.

But when spring came they all went away; Grettir went round to Codfirth, and he was asked, how he liked the fare of the winter abode at Reek-knolls; he answered, "There have I ever been as fain as might be of my meals when I got at them."

Thereafter he went west over the heaths.

The suit for the slaying of Oxmain

CHAPTER LI. OF THE SUIT FOR THE SLAYING OF THORBIORN OXMAIN, AND HOW THORIR OF GARTH WOULD NOT THAT GRETTIR SHOULD BE MADE SACKLESS.

THORGILS Arison rode to the Thing with many men; and thither came all the great men of the land. Now Thorgils and Skapti the Lawman soon met, and fell to talking.

Then said Skapti, "Is it true, Thorgils, that thou hast harboured those three men through the winter who are deemed to be the wildest of all men; yea, and all of them outlawed withal, and yet hast kept them so quiet, that no one of them has done hurt to the other?"

Thorgils said it was true enough.

Skapti said that great might over men it showed forth in him; "But how goes it, thinkest thou, with the temper of each of them; and which of them thinkest thou the bravest man?"

Thorgils said, "I deem they are all of them full stout of heart; but two of them I deem know what fear is, and yet in unlike ways; for Thormod is a great believer and fears God much; but Grettir is so fearsome in the dark, that he dares go nowhither after dusk has set in, if he may do after his own mind. But my kinsman Thorgeir I deem knows not how to fear."

"Yea, so it is with their minds as thou sayest," said Skapti; and with that they left talking.

Now, at this Althing Thorod Drapa-Stump brought forward a suit for the slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain, which he had not brought to a hearing at the Hunawater Thing, because of the kin of Atli, and he deemed that here his case would be less like to be thrown over. The kinsmen of Atli sought counsel of Skapti about the case; and he said he saw in it a lawful defence, so that full atonement would be forthcoming therefor. Then were these matters laid unto umpiredom, and most men were minded that the slayings of Atli and Thorbiorn should be set one against the other.

But when Skapti knew that, he went to the judges, and asked whence they had that? They said that they deemed the slain men were bonders of equal worth. The suit for the slaying of Oxmain

Then Skapti asked, which was the first, the outlawry of Grettir or the slaying of Atli? So, when that was reckoned up, there was a week's space betwixt Grettir's outlawry at the Althing and the slaying of Atli, which befell just after it.

Then said Skapti, "Thereof my mind misgave me, that ye had made an oversight in setting on foot the suit in that ye made him a suitor, who was outlawed already, and could neither defend nor prosecute his own case. Now I say that Grettir has nought to do with the case of the slaying, but let him take up the blood-suit, who is nighest of kin by law."

Then said Thorod Drapa-Stump, "And who shall answer for the slaying of Thorbiorn my brother?"

"See ye to that for yourselves," said Skapti; "but the kin of Grettir will never pour out fee for him or his works, if no peace is to be bought for him."

Now when Thorvald Asgeirson was aware that Grettir was set aside from following the blood-suit, he and his sought concerning who was the next of kin; and that turned out to be Skeggi, son of Gamli of Meals, and Uspak, son of Glum of Ere in Bitra; they were both of them exceeding zealous and pushing.

Now must Thorod give atonement for Atli's slaying, and two hundreds in silver he had to pay.

Then spake Snorri the Godi, "Will ye now, Ramfirthers," says he, "that this money-fine should fall away, and that Grettir be made sackless withal, for in my mind it is that as a guilty man he will be sorely felt?"

Grettir's kin took up his word well, and said that they heeded the fee nought if he might have peace and freedom. Thorod said that he saw Grettir's lot would be full of heavy trouble, and made as if he would take the offer, for his part. Then Snorri bade them first know if Thorir of Garth would give his leave to Grettir being made free; but when Thorir heard thereof he turned away exceeding wroth, and said that Grettir

The suit for the slaying of Oxmain

should never either get out of his outlawry or be brought out of it: "And the more to bring that about," said he, "a greater price shall be put on his head than on the head of any outlaw or woodman yet."

So, when he took the thing so ill, the freeing of Grettir came to nought, and Gamli and his fellows took the money to them, and kept it in their ward; but Thorod Drapa-Stump had no atonement for his brother Thorbiorn.

Now Thorir and Thorod set each of them on Grettir's head three marks of silver, and that folk deemed a new thing, for never had any greater price been laid down to such an end before than three marks in all.

Snorri said it was unwisely done to make a sport of keeping a man in outlawry who might work so much ill, and that many a man would have to pay for it.

But now men part and ride home from the Thing.

CHAPTER LII. HOW GRETTIR WAS TAKEN BY THE ICEFIRTH CARLES.

WHEN Grettir came over Codfirth-heath down into Longdale, he swept up unsparingly the goods of the petty bonders, and had of every man what he would; from some he took weapons, from some clothes; and these folk gave up in very unlike ways; but as soon as he was gone, all said they gave them unwillingly.

In those days dwelt in Waterfirth Vermund the Slender, the brother of Slaying-Styr; he had to wife Thorbiorg, the daughter of Olaf Peacock, son of Hoskuld. She was called Thorbiorg the Big; but at the time that Grettir was in Longdale had Vermund ridden to the Thing.

Now Grettir went over the neck to Bathstead. There dwelt a man called Helgi, who was the biggest of bonders thereabout: from there had Grettir a good horse, which the bonder owned, and thence he went to Giorvidale, where farmed a man named Thorkel. He was well stored with victuals, yet a mannikin withal: therefrom took Grettir what he

would, nor durst Thorkel blame him or withhold aught from him.

Grettir taken by the Icefirth carles

Thence went Grettir to Ere, and out along the side of the firth, and had from every farm victuals and clothes, and dealt hardly with many; so that most men deemed him a heavy trouble to live under.

Now he fared fearlessly withal, and took no keep of himself, and so went on till he came to Waterfirth-dale, and went to the mountain-dairy, and there he dwelt a many nights, and lay in the woods there, and took no heed to himself; but when the herdsmen knew that, they went to the farm, and said that to that stead was a fiend come whom they deemed nowise easy to deal with; then the farmers gathered together, and were thirty men in all: they lurked in the wood, so that Grettir was unaware of them, and let a shepherd spy on Grettir till they might get at him, yet they wotted not clearly who the man was.

Now so it befell that on a day as Grettir lay sleeping, the bonders came upon him, and when they saw him they took counsel how they should take him at the least cost of life, and settled so that ten men should leap on him, while some laid bonds on his feet; and this they did, and threw themselves on him, but Grettir broke forth so mightily that they fell from off him, and he got to his knees, yet thereby they might cast the bonds over him, and round about his feet; then Grettir spurned two of them so hard about the ears that they lay stunned on the earth. Now one after the other rushed at him, and he struggled hard and long, yet had they might to overcome him at the last, and so bound him.

Thereafter they talked over what they should do with him, and they bade Helgi of Bathstead take him and keep him in ward till Vermund came home from the Thing. He answered,

"Other things I deem more helpful to me than to let my house-carles sit over him, for my lands are hard to work, nor shall he ever come across me."

Grettir taken by the Icefirth carles

Then they bade Thorkel of Giorvidale take and keep him, and said that he was a man who had enow.

But Thorkel spake against it, and said that for nought would he do that: "Whereas I live alone in my house with my carline, far from other men; nor shall ye lay that box on me," said he.

"Then, Thoralf of Ere," said they, "do thou take Grettir and do well to him till after the Thing; or else bring him on to the next farm, and be answerable that he get not loose, but deliver him bound as now thou hast him."

He answers, "Nay, I will not take Grettir, for I have neither victuals nor money to keep him withal, nor has he been taken on my land, and I deem it more trouble than honour to take him, or to have aught to do with him, nor shall he ever come into my house."

Thereafter they tried it with every bonder, but one and all spake against it; and after this talk have merry men made that lay which is hight Grettir's-faring, and added many words of good game thereto for the sport of men.

So when they had talked it over long, they said, with one assent, that they would not make ill hap of their goodhap; so they went about and straightway reared up a gallows there in the wood, with the mind to hang Grettir, and made great clatter thereover.

Even therewith they see six folk riding down below in the dale, and one in coloured clothes, and they guessed that there would goodwife Thorbiorg be going from Waterfirth; and so it was, and she was going to the mountain-dairy. Now she was a very stirring woman, and exceeding wise; she had the ruling of the neighbourhood, and settled all matters, when Vermund was from home. Now she turned to where the men were gathered, and was helped off her horse, and the bonders gave her good welcome.

Then said she, "What have ye here? or who is the big-necked one who sits in bonds yonder?"

Grettir named himself, and greeted her.

She spake again, "What drove thee to this, Grettir," says she, "that thou must needs do riotously among my Thingmen?" Grettir taken by the Icefirth carles

"I may not look to everything; I must needs be somewhere," said he.

"Great ill luck it is," said she, "that these milksops should take thee in such wise that none should fall before thee. What are ye minded to do with him?"

The bonders told her that they were going to tie him up to the gallows for his lawlessness.

She answers, "Maybe Grettir is guilty enough therefor, but it is too great a deed for you, Icefirthers, to take his life, for he is a famous man, and of mighty kin, albeit he is no lucky man; but now what wilt thou do for thy life, Grettir, if I give it thee?"

He answered, "What sayest thou thereto?"

She said, "Thou shalt make oath to work no evil riots here in Icefirth, and take no revenge on whomsoever has been at the taking of thee."

Grettir said that she should have her will, and so he was loosed; and he says of himself that at that time of all times did he most rule his temper, when he smote them not as they made themselves great before him.

Now Thorbiorg bade him go home with her, and gave him a horse for his riding; so he went to Waterfirth and abode there till Vermund came home, and the housewife did well to him, and for this deed was she much renowned far and wide in the district.

But Vermund took this ill at his coming home, and asked what made Grettir there? Then Thorbiorg told him how all had gone betwixt Grettir and the Icefirthers.

"What reward was due to him," said Vermund, "that thou gavest him his life?"

"Many grounds there were thereto," said Thorbiorg; "and this, first of all, that thou wilt be deemed a greater chief than before in that thou hast a wife who has dared to

Grettir taken by the Icefirth carles

do such a deed; and then withal surely would Hrefna his kinswoman say that I should not let men slay him; and, thirdly, he is a man of the greatest prowess in many wise."

"A wise wife thou art withal," said Vermund, "and have thou thanks therefor."

Then he said to Grettir, "Stout as thou art, but little was to be paid for thee, when thou must needs be taken of mannikins; but so ever it fares with men riotous."

Then Grettir sang this stave:

"Ill luck to me
That I should be
On sea-roof-firth
Borne unto earth;
Ill luck enow
To lie alow,
This head of mine
Griped fast by swine."

"What were they minded to do to thee," said Vermund, "when they took thee there?"

Quoth Grettir:

"There many men
Bade give me then
E'en Sigar's meed
For lovesome deed;
Till found me there
That willow fair,
Whose leaves are praise,
Her stems good days."

Vermund asked, "Would they have hanged thee then, if they alone had had to meddle with matters?"

Said Grettir:

"Yea, to the snare
That dangled there
My head must I
Soon bring anigh;

But Thorbiorg came
The brightest dame,
And from that need
The singer freed."

Grettir taken by the Icefirth carles

Then said Vermund, "Did she bid thee to her?" Grettir answered:

"Sif's lord's good aid,
My saviour, bade
To take my way
With her that day;
So did it fall;
And therewithal
A horse she gave;
Good peace I have."

"Mighty will thy life be and troublous," said Vermund; "but now thou hast learned to beware of thy foes; but I have no will to harbour thee, and gain therefor the ill-will of many rich men; but best is it for thee to seek thy kinsmen, though few men will be willing to take thee if they may do aught else; nor to most men art thou an easy fellow withal."

Now Grettir was in Waterfirth a certain space, and then fared thence to the Westfirths, and sought shelter of many great men; but something ever came to pass whereby none of them would harbour him.

CHAPTER LIII. GRETTIR WITH THORSTEIN KUGGSON.

WHEN the autumn was somewhat spent, Grettir turned back by the south, and made no stay till he came to Liarskogar to Thorstein Kuggson, his kinsman, and there had he good welcome, for Thorstein bade him abide there through the winter, and that bidding he agreed to. Thorstein was a busy man and a good smith, and kept men close to their work; but Grettir had little mind to work, therefore their tempers went but little together.

Grettir with Thorstein Kuggson

Thorstein had let make a church at his homestead; and a bridge he had made out from his house, wrought with great craft; for in the outside bridge, under the beams that held it up, were rings wrought all about, and din-bells, so that one might hear over to Scarf-stead, half a sea-mile off, if aught went over the bridge, because of the shaking of the rings. Thorstein had much to do over this work, for he was a great worker of iron; but Grettir went fiercely at the iron-smiting, yet was in many minds thereover; but he was quiet through the winter, so that nought befell worthy telling. But when the Ramfirthers knew that Grettir was with Thorstein, they had their band afoot as soon as spring came. So when Thorstein knew that, he bade Grettir seek some other shelter than his house, "For I see thou wilt not work, and men who will do nought are not meet men for me."

"Where wouldst thou have me go, then?" said Grettir.

Thorstein bade him fare to the south country, and find his kin, "But come to me if they avail thee not."

Now so Grettir wrought that he went south to Burgfirth, to Grim Thorhallson, and dwelt there till over the Thing. Then Grim sent him on to Skapti the Lawman at Hjalli, and he went south by the lower heaths and stayed not till he came to Thorhall, son of Asgrim, son of Ellida-grim, and went little in the peopled lands. Thorhall knew Grettir because of his father and mother, and, indeed, by then was the name of Grettir well renowned through all the land because of his great deeds.

Thorhall was a wise man, and he did well to Grettir, but would not let him abide there long.

CHAPTER LIV. GRETTIR MEETS HALLMUND ON THE KEEL.

NOW Grettir fared from Tongue up to Hawkdale, and thence north upon the Keel, and kept about there long that summer; nor was there trust of him that he would not take men's goods from them, as they went from or to the north over the Keel, because he was hard put to it to get wares.

Now on a day, when as Grettir would keep about the north at Doveness-path, he saw a man riding from the north over the Keel; he was huge to behold on horseback, and had a good horse, and an embossed bridle well wrought; another horse he had in tow and bags thereon; this man had withal a slouched hat on his head, nor could his face be clearly seen. Grettir meets Hallmund

Now Grettir looked hard at the horse and the goods thereon, and went to meet the man, and greeting him asked his name, but he said he was called Air. "I wot well what thou art called," said he, "for thou shalt be Grettir the Strong, the son of Asmund. Whither art thou bound?"

"As to the place I have not named it yet," said Grettir; "but as to my errand, it is to know if thou wilt lay down some of the goods thou farest with."

Said Air, "Why should I give thee mine own, or what wilt thou give me therefor?"

Grettir answers, "Hast thou not heard that I take, and give no money again? and yet it seems to most men that I get what I will."

Said Air, "Give such choice as this to those who deem it good, but not thus will I give up what I have; let each of us go his own way."

And therewithal he rode forth past Grettir and spurred his horse.

"Nay, we part not so hastily," said Grettir, and laid hold of the reins of Air's horse in front of his hands, and held on with both hands.

Said Air, "Go thy ways, nought thou hast of me if I may hold mine own."

"That will now be proven," said Grettir.

Now Air stretched his hands down the head-gear and laid hold of the reins betwixt Grettir's hands and the snaffle-rings and dragged at them so hard that Grettir's hands were drawn down along the reins, till Air dragged all the bridle from him.

Grettir looked into the hollow of his hands, and saw that this man must have strength in claws rather than not, and he looked after him, and said, "Whither art thou minded to fare?"

Grettir meets Hallmund

Air answered and sang:

"To the Kettle's side
Now will I ride,
Where the waters fall
From the great ice-wall;
If thou hast mind
There mayest thou find
With little stone[1]
Fist's land alone."

Grettir said, "It is of no avail to seek after thine abode if thou tellest of it no clearer than this."

Then Air spake and sang:

"I would not hide
Where I abide,
If thou art fain
To see me again;
From that lone weald,
Over Burgfirth field,
That ye men name
Balljokul, I came."

Thereat they parted, and Grettir sees that he has no strength against this man; and therewithal he sang a stave:

"Too far on this luckless day,
Atli, good at weapon-play,
Brisk Illugi were from me;
Such-like oft I shall not be
As I was, when I must stand
With the reins drawn through my hand
By the unflinching losel Air.
Maids weep when they know I fear."

[1] Hall, a "stone:" mund, is "hand," and by periphrasis "land of fist;" so that Hallmund is meant by this couplet, and that was the real name of "Air," who is not a mere man, but a friendly spirit of the mountains.

Thereafter Grettir went to the south from the Keel; and rode to Hjalli and found Skapti, and prayed for watch and ward from him. Grettir meets Hallmund

Skapti said, "It is told me that thou farest somewhat lawlessly, and layest hands on other men's goods; and this beseems thee ill, great of kin as thou art. Now all would make a better tale, if thou didst not rob and reive; but whereas I have to bear the name of lawman in the land, folk would not abide that I should take outlawed men to me, and break the laws thereby. I will that thou seek some place wherein thou wilt not have need to take men's goods from them."

Grettir said he would do even so, yet withal that he might scarcely be alone because he so feared the dark.

Skapti said that of that one thing then, which he deemed the best, he might not avail himself; "But put not such trust in any as to fare as thou didst in the Westfirths; it has been many a man's bane that he has been too trustful."

Grettir thanked him for his wholesome redes, and so turned back to Burgfirth in the autumn, and found Grim Thorhallson, his friend, and told him of Skapti's counsels; so Grim bade him fare north to Fishwater lakes on Ernewaterheath; and thus did he.

CHAPTER LV. OF GRETTIR ON ERNEWATERHEATH, & HIS DEALINGS WITH GRIM THERE.

GRETTIR went up to Ernewaterheath, and made there a hut for himself (whereof are yet signs left) and dwelt there, for now was he fain to do anything rather than rob and reive; he got him nets and a boat and caught fish for his food; exceeding dreary he deemed it in the mountains, because he was so fearsome of the dark.

But when other outlaws heard this, that Grettir was come down there, many of them had a mind to see him, because they thought there was much avail of him. There was a man called Grim, a Northlander, who was an outlaw; with him the Northlanders made a bargain that he should slay Grettir, and promised him freedom and gifts of money, if he

Grettir's dealings with Grim

should bring it to pass; so he went to meet Grettir, and prayed him to take him in.

Grettir answers, "I see not how thou art the more holpen for being with me, and troublous to heed are ye woodfolk; but ill I deem it to be alone, if other choice there were; but I will that such an one only be with me as shall do whatso work may befall."

Grim said he was of no other mind, and prayed hard that he might dwell there; then Grettir let himself be talked round, and took him in; and he was there on into the winter, and watched Grettir, but deemed it no little matter to set on him. Grettir misdoubted him, and had his weapons by his side night and day, nor durst Grim attack him while he was awake.

But one morning whenas Grim came in from fishing, he went into the hut and stamped with his foot, and would know whether Grettir slept, but he started in nowise, but lay still; and the short-sword hung up over Grettir's head.

Now Grim thought that no better chance would happen, so he made a great noise, that Grettir might chide him, therefore, if he were awake, but that befell not. Now he thought that Grettir must surely be asleep, so he went stealthily up to the bed and reached out for the short-sword, and took it down and unsheathed it. But even therewith Grettir sprang up on to the floor, and caught the short-sword just as the other raised it aloft, and laid the other hand on Grim betwixt the shoulders, and cast him down with such a fall, that he was well-nigh stunned; "Ah, such hast thou shown thyself," said he, "though thou wouldst give me good hope of thee." Then he had a true story from him, and thereafter slew him.

And now Grettir deemed he saw what it was to take in wood-folk, and so the winter wore; and nothing Grettir thought to be of more trouble than his dread of the dark.

CHAPTER LVI. OF GRETTIR & THORIR REDBEARD.

NOW Thorir of Garth heard where Grettir had set himself down, and was fain to set afoot some plot whereby he might be slain. There was a man called Thorir Redbeard; he was the biggest of men, and a great man-slayer, and therefore was he made outlaw throughout the land. Thorir of Garth sent word to him, and when they met he bade him go on an errand of his, and slay Grettir the Strong. Redbeard said that was no easy task, and that Grettir was a wise man and a wary.

Thorir bade him make up his mind to this; "A manly task it is for so brisk a fellow as thou; but I shall bring thee out of thine outlawry, and therewithal give thee money enough."

So by that counsel Redbeard abode, and Thorir told him how he should go about the winning of Grettir. So thereafter he went round the land by the east, for thus he deemed his faring would be the less misdoubted; so he came to Ernewaterheath when Grettir had been there a winter. But when he met Grettir, he prayed for winter dwelling at his hands.

Grettir answered, "I cannot suffer you often to play the like play with me that he did who came here last autumn, who bepraised me cunningly, and when he had been here a little while lay in wait for my life; now, therefore, I have no mind to run the risk any more of the taking in of wood-folk."

Thorir answered, "My mind goes fully with thine in that thou deemest ill of outlawed men: and thou wilt have heard tell of me as of a man-slayer and a misdoer, but not as of a doer of such foul deeds as to betray my master. Now, *ill it is ill to be*, for many deem others to do after their own ways; nor should I have been minded to come hither, if I might have had choice of better things; withal I deem we shall not easily be won while we stand together; thou mightest risk trying at first how thou likest me, and let me go my ways whenso thou markest ill faith in me."

Grettir answered, "Once more then will I risk it, even

with thee; but wot thou well, that if I misdoubt me of thee, that will be thy bane."

Thorir bade him do even so, and thereafter Grettir received him, and found this, that he must have the strength of twain, what work soever he took in hand: he was ready for anything that Grettir might set him to, and Grettir need turn to nothing, nor had he found his life so good since he had been outlawed, yet was he ever so wary of himself that Thorir never got a chance against him.

Thorir Redbeard was with Grettir on the heath for two winters, and now he began to loathe his life on the heath, and falls to thinking what deed he shall do that Grettir will not see through; so one night in spring a great storm arose while they were asleep; Grettir awoke therewith, and asked where was their boat. Thorir sprang up, and ran down to the boat, and brake it all to pieces, and threw the broken pieces about here and there, so that it seemed as though the storm had driven them along. Then he went into the hut, and called out aloud,

"Good things have not befallen us, my friend," said he; "for our boat is all broken to pieces, and the nets lie a long way out in the water."

"Go and bring them in then," said Grettir, "for methinks it is with thy goodwill that the boat is broken."

Thorir answered, "Among manly deeds swimming is the least handy to me, but most other deeds I think I may do against men who are not marvellous; thou mayest wot well enough that I was minded that thou shouldst not have to work while I abode here, and this I would not bid if it were in me to do it."

Then Grettir arose and took his weapons, and went to the water-side. Now the land was so wrought there that a ness ran into the water, and a great creek was on the other side, and the water was deep right up to the shore.

Now Grettir spake: "Swim off to the nets, and let me see how skilled a man thou art."

"I told thee before," said Thorir, "that I might not swim;

and now I know not what is gone with thy manliness and daring." Of Grettir & Thorir Redbeard

"Well, the nets I may get in," said Grettir, "but betray thou me not, since I trust in thee."

Said Thorir, "Deem me not to be so shamed and worthless."

"Thou wilt thyself prove thyself, what thou art," said Grettir, and therewith he put off his clothes and weapons, and swam off for the nets. He swept them up together, and brought them to land, and cast them on to the bank; but when he was minded to come aland, then Thorir caught up the short-sword and drew it hastily, and ran therewith swiftly on Grettir, and smote at him as he set foot on the bank; but Grettir fell on his back down into the water, and sank like a stone; and Thorir stood gazing out on to the water, to keep him off from the shore if he came up again; but Grettir dived and groped along the bottom as near as he might to the bank, so that Thorir might not see him till he came into the creek at his back, and got aland; and Thorir heeded him not, and felt nought till Grettir heaved him up over his head, and cast him down so hard that the short-sword flew out of his hand; then Grettir got hold of it and had no words with him, but smote off his head straightway, and this was the end of his life.

But after this would Grettir never take outlaws to him, yet hardly might he bear to be alone.

CHAPTER LVII. HOW THORIR OF GARTH SET ON GRETTIR ON ERNEWATERHEATH.

AT the Althing Thorir of Garth heard of the slaying of Thorir Redbeard, and now he thought he saw that he had no light task to deal with; but such rede he took that he rode west over the lower heathlands from the Thing with well-nigh eighty men, and was minded to go and take Grettir's life: but when Grim Thorhallson knew thereof he sent Grettir word and bade him beware of himself, so Grettir ever took heed to the goings of men. But one day he saw many men riding who took the way to his abode; so he ran

Thorir of Garth sets on Grettir

into a rift in the rocks, nor would he flee because he had not seen all the strength of those folk.

Then up came Thorir and all his men, and bade them smite Grettir's head from his body, and said that the ill-doer's life would be had cheaply now.

Grettir answered, "*Though the spoon has taken it up, yet the mouth has had no sup.* From afar have ye come, and marks of the game shall some have ere we part."

Then Thorir egged on his men busily to set on him; but the pass was narrow, and he could defend it well from one side; yet hereat he marvelled, that howsoever they went round to the back of him, yet no hurt he got thereby; some fell of Thorir's company, and some were wounded, but nothing might they do.

Then said Thorir, "Oft have I heard that Grettir is a man of marvel before all others for prowess and good heart, but never knew I that he was so wise a wizard as now I behold him; for half as many again fall at his back as fall before him; lo, now we have to do with trolls and no men."

So he bid them turn away and they did so. Grettir marvelled how that might be, for withal he was utterly foredone.

Thorir and his men turn away and ride toward the north country, and men deemed their journey to be of the shamefullest; eighteen men had they left there and many were wounded withal.

Now Grettir went up into the pass, and found there one great of growth, who sat leaning against the rock and was sore wounded. Grettir asked him of his name, and he said he was hight Hallmund.

"And this I will tell thee to know me by, that thou didst deem me to have a good hold of the reins that summer when we met on the Keel; now, methinks, I have paid thee back therefor."

"Yea, in sooth," said Grettir, "I deem that thou hast shown great manliness toward me; whenso I may, I will reward thee."

Hallmund said, "But now I will that thou come to my

abode, for thou must e'en think time drags heavily here on the heaths."

Thorir of Garth sets on Grettir

Grettir said he was fain thereof; and now they fare both together south under Balljokul, and there had Hallmund a huge cave, and a daughter great of growth and of high mind; there they did well to Grettir, and the woman healed the wounds of both of them, and Grettir dwelt long there that summer, and a lay he made on Hallmund, wherein is this:

"Wide and high doth Hallmund stride,
In the hollow mountain side."

And this stave also is therein:

"At Ernewater, one by one,
Stole the swords forth in the sun,
Eager for the road of death
Swept athwart by sharp spears' breath;
Many a dead Wellwharfer's lands
That day gave to other hands.
Hallmund, dweller in the cave,
Grettir's life that day did save."

Men say that Grettir slew six men in that meeting, but Hallmund twelve.

Now as the summer wore Grettir yearned for the peopled country, to see his friends and kin; Hallmund bade him visit him when he came to the south country again, and Grettir promised him so to do; then he went west to Burgfirth, and thence to the Broadfirth Dales, and sought counsel of Thorstein Kuggson as to where he should now seek for protection, but Thorstein said that his foes were now so many that few would harbour him; "But thou mightest fare south to the Marshes and see what fate abides thee there."

So in the autumn Grettir went south to the Marshes.

Grettir in Fairwood-fell

CHAP. LVIII. GRETTIR IN FAIRWOOD-FELL.

IN those days dwelt at Holm Biorn the Hitdale-Champion, who was the son of Arngeir, the son of Berse the Godless, the son of Balk, who settled Ramfirth as is aforesaid; Biorn was a great chief and a hardy man, and would ever harbour outlawed men.

Now Grettir came to Holm, and Biorn gave him good cheer, for there had been friendship between the earlier kin of both of them; so Grettir asked if he would give him harbourage; but Biorn said that he had got to himself so many feuds through all the land that men would shun harbouring him so long as to be made outlaws therefor: "But some gain will I be to thee, if thou lettest those men dwell in peace who are under my ward, whatsoever thou dost by other men in the countryside."

Grettir said yea thereto. Then said Biorn, "Well, I have thought over it, and in that mountain, which stretches forth outside of Hitriver, is a stead good for defence, and a good hiding-place withal, if it be cunningly dealt with; for there is a hollow through the mountain, that is seen from the way below; for the highway lies beneath it, but above is a slip of sand and stones so exceeding steep, that few men may come up there if one hardy man stand on his defence above in the lair. Now this seems to me the best rede for thee, and the one thing worth talking of for thine abode, because, withal, it is easy to go thence and get goods from the Marshes, and right away to the sea."

Grettir said that he would trust in his foresight if he would give him any help. Then he went up to Fairwood-fell and made his abode there; he hung grey wadmal before the hole in the mountain, and from the way below it was like to behold as if one saw through. Now he was wont to ride for things needful through the country-side, and men deemed a woful guest had come among them whereas he went.

Thord Kolbeinson dwelt at Hitness in those days, and a good skald he was; at that time was there great enmity be-

twixt him and Biorn; and Biorn was but half loth, though Grettir wrought some ill on Thord's men or his goods.

Grettir in Fairwood-fell

Grettir was ever with Biorn, and they tried their skill in many sports, and it is shown in the story of Biorn that they were deemed equal in prowess, but it is the mind of most that Grettir was the strongest man ever known in the land, since Orm the son of Storolf, and Thoralf the son of Skolm, left off their trials of strength. Grettir and Biorn swam in one spell all down Hitriver, from the lake right away to the sea: they brought those stepping-stones into the river that have never since been washed away either by floods, or the drift of ice, or glacier slips.

So Grettir abode in Fairwood-fell for one winter, in such wise, that none set on him, though many lost their goods at his hands and could do nought therefor, for a good place for defence he had, and was ever good friend to those nighest to him.

CHAPTER LIX. GISLI'S MEETING WITH GRETTIR.

THERE was a man hight Gisli, the son of that Thorstein whom Snorri Godi had slain.[1] Gisli was a big man and strong, a man showy in weapons and clothes, who made much of himself, and was somewhat of a self-praiser; he was a seafaring man, and came that summer out to Whiteriver, whenas Grettir had been a winter on the fell. Thord, son of Kolbein, rode to his ship, and Gisli gave him good welcome, and bade him take of his wares whatso he would; thereto Thord agreed, and then they fell to talk one with the other, and Gisli said:

"Is that true which is told me, that ye have no counsel that avails to rid you of a certain outlaw who is doing you great ill?"

Thord said, "We have not tried aught on him yet, but to many he seems a man hard to deal with, and that has been proven on many a man."

Gisli's meeting with Grettir

"It is like, methinks, that ye should find Biorn a heavy trouble, if ye may not drive away this man: luckless it is for you withal, that I shall be too far off this winter to better matters for you."

"Thou wilt be better pleased to deal with him by hearsay."

"Nay, no need to tell me of Grettir," said Gisli; "I have borne harder brunts when I was in warfare along with King Knut the Mighty, and west over the Sea, and I was ever thought to hold my own; and if I should have a chance at him I would trust myself and my weapons well enough."

Thord said he would not work for nought if he prevailed against Grettir; "For there is more put upon his head than on the head of any other of wood-folk; six marks of silver it was; but last summer Thorir of Garth laid thereto yet three marks; and men deem he will have enough to do therefor whose lot it is to win it."

"All things soever will men do for money," says Gisli, "and we chapmen not the least; but now shall we keep this talk hushed up, for mayhap he will be the warier," says he, "if he come to know that I am with you against him: now I am minded to abide this winter at Snowfellsness at Waveridge. Is his lair on my way at all? for he will not foresee this, nor shall I draw together many men against him."

Thord liked the plot well, he rode home therewith and held his peace about this; but now things went according to the saw, *a listening ear in the holt is anear;* men had been by at the talk betwixt Thord and Gisli, who were friends to Biorn of Hitdale, and they told him all from end to end; so when Biorn and Grettir met, Biorn showed forth the whole matter to him, and said that now he might prove how he could meet a foe.

"It would not be bad sport," said he, "if thou wert to handle him roughly, but to slay him not, if thou mightest do otherwise."

Grettir smiled thereat, but spake little.

Now at the folding time in the autumn Grettir went down to Flysia-wharf and got sheep for himself; he had laid hold on four wethers; but the bonders became ware of his ways and went after him; and these two things befell at the same time, that he got up under the fell-side, and that they came upon him, and would drive the sheep from him, yet bare they no weapon against him; they were six altogether, and stood thick in his path. Now the sheep troubled him and he waxed wroth, and caught up two of those men, and cast them down over the hill-side, so that they lay stunned; and when the others saw that, they came on less eagerly; then Grettir took up the sheep and locked them together by the horns, and threw them over his shoulders, two on each side, and went up into his lair. Gisli's meeting with Grettir

So the bonders turned back, and deemed they had got but ill from him, and their lot misliked them now worse than before.

Now Gisli abode at his ship through the autumn till it was rolled ashore. Many things made him abide there, so he was ready late, and rode away but a little before winter-nights. Then he went from the south, and guested under Raun on the south side of Hitriver. In the morning, before he rode thence, he began a talk with his fellows:

"Now shall we ride in coloured clothes to-day, and let the outlaw see that we are not like other wayfarers who are drifted about here day by day."

So this they did, and they were three in all: but when they came west over the river, he spake again to them:

"Here in these bents, I am told, lurks the outlaw, and no easy way is there up to him; but may it not perchance seem good to him to come and meet us and behold our array?"

They said that it was ever his wont so to do. Now that morning Grettir had risen early in his lair; the weather was cold and frosty, and snow had fallen, but not much of it. He saw how three men rode from the south over Hitriver, and their state raiment glittered and their inlaid shields. Then

Gisli's meeting with Grettir

it came into his mind who these should be, and he deems it would be good for him to get some rag of their array; and he was right wishful withal to meet such braggarts: so he catches up his weapons and runs down the slip-side. And when Gisli heard the clatter of the stones, he spake thus:

"There goes a man down the hill-side, and somewhat big he is, and he is coming to meet us: now, therefore, let us go against him briskly, for here is good getting come to hand."

His fellows said that this one would scarce run into their very hands, if he knew not his might; "And good it is that *he bewail who brought the woe.*"

So they leapt off their horses, and therewith Grettir came up to them, and laid hands on a clothes-bag that Gisli had tied to his saddle behind him, and said,

"This will I have, for oft I lowt for little things."

Gisli answers, "Nay, it shall not be; dost thou know with whom thou hast to do?"

Says Grettir, "I am not very clear about that; nor will I have much respect for persons, since I am lowly now and ask for little."

"Mayhap thou thinkest it little," says he, "but I had rather pay down thirty hundreds; but robbery and wrong are ever uppermost in thy mind methinks; so on him, good fellows, and let see what he may do."

So did they, and Grettir gave back before them to a stone which stands by the way and is called Grettir's-Heave, and thence defended himself; and Gisli egged on his fellows eagerly; but Grettir saw now that he was no such a hardy heart as he had made believe, for he was ever behind his fellows' backs; and withal he grew aweary of this fulling business, and swept round the short-sword, and smote one of Gisli's fellows to the death, and leaped down from the stone, and set on so fiercely, that Gisli shrank aback before him all along the hillside: there Gisli's other fellow was slain, and then Grettir spake:

"Little is it seen in thee that thou hast done well wide in the world, and in ill wise dost thou part from thy fellows."

Gisli's meeting with Grettir

Gisli answers, "*Hottest is the fire that lies on oneself—with hell's-man are dealings ill.*"

Then they gave and took but a little, before Gisli cast away his weapons, and took to his heels out along the mountain. Grettir gave him time to cast off whatso he would, and every time Gisli saw a chance for it he threw off somewhat of his clothes; and Grettir never followed him so close but that there was still some space betwixt them. Gisli ran right past that mountain and then across Coldriver-dale, and then through Aslaug's-lithe and above by Kolbeinstead, and then out into Burgh-lava; and by then was he in shirt and breech alone, and was now exceeding weary. Grettir still followed after him, and there was ever a stone's throw between them; and now he pulled up a great bush. But Gisli made no stay till he came out at Haf-firth-river, and it was swollen with ice and ill to ford; Gisli made straightway for the river, but Grettir ran in on him and seized him, and then the strength of either was soon known: Grettir drave him down under him, and said,

"Art thou that Gisli who would fain meet Grettir Asmundson?"

Gisli answers, "I have found him now in good sooth, nor do I know in what wise we shall part: keep that which thou hast got, and let me go free."

Grettir said, "Nay, thou art scarce deft enow to learn what I have to teach thee, so needs must I give thee somewhat to remember it by."

Therewith he pulls the shirt up over his head and let the twigs go all down his back, and along both sides of him; and Gisli strove all he might to wriggle away from him; but Grettir flogged him through and through, and then let him go; and Gisli thought he would learn no more of Grettir and have such another flogging withal; nor did he ever again earn the like skin-rubbing.

Gisli's meeting with Grettir

But when he got his legs under him again, he ran off unto a great pool in the river and swam it, and came by night to a farm called Horseholt, and utterly foredone he was by then. There he lay a week with his body all swollen, and then fared to his abode.

Grettir turned back, and took up the things Gisli had cast down, and brought them to his place, nor from that time forth gat Gisli aught thereof.

Many men thought Gisli had his due herein for the noise and swagger he had made about himself; and Grettir sang this about their dealings together:

> "In fighting ring where steed meets steed,
> The sluggish brute of mongrel breed,
> Certes will shrink back nothing less
> Before the stallion's dauntlessness,
> Than Gisli before me to-day;
> As, casting shame and clothes away,
> And sweating o'er the marsh with fear,
> He helped the wind from mouth and rear."

The next spring Gisli got ready to go to his ship, and bade men above all things beware of carrying aught of their goods south along the mountain, and said that the very fiend dwelt there.

Gisli rode south along the sea all the way to his ship, and never met Grettir again; and now he is out of the story.

But things grew worse between Thord Kolbeinson and Grettir, and Thord set on foot many a plot to get Grettir driven away or slain.

CHAPTER LX. OF THE FIGHT AT HITRIVER.

The fight at Hitriver

WHEN Grettir had been two winters at Fairwood-fell, and the third was now come, he fared south to the Marshes, to the farm called Brook-bow, and had thence six wethers against the will of him who owned them. Then he went to Acres and took away two neat for slaughtering, and many sheep, and then went up south of Hitriver.

But when the bonders were ware of his ways, they sent word to Thord at Hitness, and bade him take in hand the slaying of Grettir; but he hung back, yet for the prayers of men got his son Arnor, who was afterwards called Earls' Skald, to go with them, and bade them withal to take heed that Grettir escaped not.

Then were men sent throughout all the country-side. There was a man called Biarni, who dwelt at Jorvi in Flysia-wharf, and he gathered men together from without Hitriver; and their purpose was that a band should be on either bank of the river.

Now Grettir had two men with him; a man called Eyolf, the son of the bonder at Fairwood, and a stout man; and another he had besides.

First came up Thorarin of Acres and Thorfinn of Brook-bow, and there were nigh twenty men in their company. Then was Grettir fain to make westward across the river, but therewith came up on the west side thereof Arnor and Biarni. A narrow ness ran into the water on the side whereas Grettir stood; so he drave the beasts into the furthermost parts of the ness, when he saw the men coming up, for never would he give up what he had once laid his hands on.

Now the Marsh-men straightway made ready for an onslaught, and made themselves very big; Grettir bade his fellows take heed that none came at his back; and not many men could come on at once.

Now a hard fight there was betwixt them; Grettir smote with the short-sword with both hands, and no easy matter it was to get at him; some of the Marsh-men fell, and some

The fight at Hitriver

were wounded; those on the other side of the river were slow in coming up, because the ford was not very near, nor did the fight go on long before they fell off; Thorarin of Acres was a very old man, so that he was not at this onslaught. But when this fight was over, then came up Thrand, son of Thorarin, and Thorgils Ingialdson, the brother's son of Thorarin, and Finnbogi, son of Thorgeir Thorhaddson of Hitdale, and Steinulf Thorleifson from Lavadale; these egged on their men eagerly to set on, and yet another fierce onslaught they made. Now Grettir saw that he must either flee or spare himself nought; and now he went forth so fiercely that none might withstand him; because they were so many that he saw not how he might escape, but that he did his best before he fell; he was fain withal that the life of such an one as he deemed of some worth might be paid for his life; so he ran at Steinulf of Lavadale, and smote him on the head and clave him down to the shoulders, and straightway with another blow smote Thorgils Ingialdson in the midst and well-nigh cut him asunder; then would Thrand run forth to revenge his kinsman, but Grettir smote him on the right thigh, so that the blow took off all the muscle, and straightway was he unmeet to fight; and thereafter withal a great wound Grettir gave to Finnbogi.

Then Thorarin cried out and bade them fall back, "For the longer ye fight the worse ye will get of him, and he picks out men even as he willeth from your company."

So did they, and turned away; and there had ten men fallen, and five were wounded to death, or crippled, but most of those who had been at that meeting had some hurt or other; Grettir was marvellously wearied and yet but a little wounded.

And now the Marsh-men made off with great loss of men, for many stout fellows had fallen there.

But those on the other side of the river fared slowly, and came not up till the meeting was all done; and when they saw how ill their men had fared, then Arnor would not risk himself, and much rebuke he got therefor from his father and

many others; and men are minded to think that he was no man of prowess. The fight at Hitriver

Now that place where they fought is called Grettir's-point to-day.

CHAPTER LXI. HOW GRETTIR LEFT FAIRWOOD-FELL, & OF HIS ABIDING IN THORIR'S-DALE

BUT Grettir and his men took horse and rode up to the fell, for they were all wounded, and when they came to Fairwood there was Eyolf left; the farmer's daughter was out of doors, and asked for tidings; Grettir told all as clearly as might be, and sang a stave withal:

"O thou warder of horn's wave,
Not on this side of the grave
Will Steinulf's head be whole again;
Many more there gat their bane;
Little hope of Thorgils now
After that bone-breaking blow:
Eight Gold-scatterers more they say,
Dead along the river lay."

Thereafter Grettir went to his lair and sat there through the winter; but when he and Biorn met, Biorn said to him, that he deemed that much had been done; "and no peace thou wilt have here in the long run: now hast thou slain both kin and friends of mine, yet shall I not cast aside what I have promised thee whiles thou art here."

Grettir said he must needs defend his hands and life, "but ill it is if thou mislikest it."

Biorn said that things must needs be as they were.

A little after came men to Biorn who had lost kinsmen at Grettir's hands, and bade him not to suffer that riotous man to abide there longer in their despite; and Biorn said that it should be as they would as soon as the winter was over.

Now Thrand, the son of Thorarin of Acres, was healed; a stout man he was, and had to wife Steinun, daughter of Rut

of Combeness; Thorleif of Lavadale, the father of Steinulf, was a very mighty man, and from him are come the men of Lavadale.

Grettir abides in Thorir's-dale

Now nought more is told of the dealings of Grettir with the Marsh-men while he was on the mountain; Biorn still kept up his friendship with him, though his friends grew somewhat the fewer for that he let Grettir abide there, because men took it ill that their kin should fall unatoned.

At the time of the Thing, Grettir departed from the Marsh-country, and went to Burg-firth and found Grim Thorhallson, and sought counsel of him, as to what to do now. Grim said he had no strength to keep him, therefore fared Grettir to find Hallmund his friend, and dwelt there that summer till it wore to its latter end.

In the autumn Grettir went to Goatland, and waited there till bright weather came on; then he went up to Goatland Jokul, and made for the south-east, and had with him a kettle, and tools to strike fire withal. But men deem that he went there by the counsel of Hallmund, for far and wide was the land known of him.

So Grettir went on till he found a dale in the jokul, long and somewhat narrow, locked up by jokuls all about, in such wise that they overhung the dale. He came down somehow, and then he saw fair hill-sides grass-grown and set with bushes. Hot springs there were therein, and it seemed to him that it was by reason of earth-fires that the ice-cliffs did not close up over the vale.

A little river ran along down the dale, with level shores on either side thereof. There the sun came but seldom; but he deemed he might scarcely tell over the sheep that were in that valley, so many they were; and far better and fatter than any he had ever seen.

Now Grettir abode there, and made himself a hut of such wood as he could come by. He took of the sheep for his meat, and there was more on one of them than on two elsewhere: one ewe there was, brown with a polled head, with her lamb, that he deemed the greatest beauty for her goodly

growth. He was fain to take the lamb, and so he did, and thereafter slaughtered it: three stone of suet there was in it, but the whole carcase was even better. But when Brownhead missed her lamb, she went up on Grettir's hut every night, and bleated in suchwise that he might not sleep anight, so that it misliked him above all things that he had slaughtered the lamb, because of her troubling.

Grettir abides in Thorir's-dale

But every evening at twilight he heard some one hoot up in the valley, and then all the sheep ran together to one fold every evening.

So Grettir says, that a half-troll ruled over the valley, a giant hight Thorir, and in trust of his keeping did Grettir abide there; by him did Grettir name the valley, calling it Thorir's-dale. He said withal that Thorir had daughters, with whom he himself had good game, and that they took it well, for not many were the new-comers thereto; but when fasting time was, Grettir made this change therein, that fat and livers should be eaten in Lent.

Now nought happed to be told of through the winter. At last Grettir found it so dreary there, that he might abide there no longer: then he gat him gone from the valley, and went south across the jokul, and came from the north, right against the midst of Shieldbroadfell.

He raised up a flat stone and bored a hole therein, and said that whoso put his eye to the hole in that stone should straightway behold the gulf of the pass that leads from Thorir's-vale.

So he fared south through the land, and thence to the East-firths; and in this journey he was that summer long, and the winter, and met all the great men there, but somewhat ever thrust him aside that nowhere got he harbouring or abode; then he went back by the north, and dwelt at sundry places.

The death of Hallmund

CHAPTER LXII. OF THE DEATH OF HALLMUND, GRETTIR'S FRIEND.

A LITTLE after Grettir had gone from Ernewaterheath, there came a man thither, Grim by name, the son of the widow at Kropp. He had slain the son of Eid Skeggison of the Ridge, and had been outlawed therefor; he abode whereas Grettir had dwelt afore, and got much fish from the water. Hallmund took it ill that he had come in Grettir's stead, and was minded that he should have little good hap how much fish soever he caught.

So it chanced on a day that Grim had caught a hundred fish, and he bore them to his hut and hung them up outside, but the next morning when he came thereto they were all gone; that he deemed marvellous, and went to the water; and now he caught two hundred fish, went home and stored them up; and all went the same way, for they were all gone in the morning; and now he thought it hard to trace all to one spring. But the third day he caught three hundred fish, brought them home and watched over them from his shed, looking out through a hole in the door to see if aught might come anigh. Thus wore the night somewhat, and when the third part of the night was gone by, he heard one going along outside with heavy footfalls; and when he was ware thereof, he took an axe that he had, the sharpest of weapons, for he was fain to know what this one was about; and he saw that the new-comer had a great basket on his back. Now he set it down, and peered about, and saw no man abroad; he gropes about to the fishes, and deems he has got a good handful, and into the basket he scoops them one and all; then is the basket full, but the fishes were so big that Grim thought that no horse might bear more. Now he takes them up and puts himself under the load, and at that very point of time, when he was about to stand upright, Grim ran out, and with both hands smote at his neck, so that the axe sank into the shoulder; thereat he turned off sharp, and set off running with the basket south over the mountain.

Grim turned off after him, and was fain to know if he had

got enough. They went south all the way to Balljokul, and there this man went into a cave; a bright fire burnt in the cave, and thereby sat a woman, great of growth, but shapely withal. Grim heard how she welcomed her father, and called him Hallmund. He cast down his burden heavily, and groaned aloud; she asked him why he was all covered with blood, but he answered and sang:

The death of Hallmund

"Now know I aright,
That in man's might,
And in man's bliss,
No trust there is;
On the day of bale
Shall all things fail;
Courage is o'er,
Luck mocks no more."

She asked him closely of their dealings, but he told her all even as it had befallen.

"Now shalt thou hearken," said he, "for I shall tell of my deeds and sing a song thereon, and thou shalt cut it on a staff as I give it out."

So she did, and he sang Hallmund's song withal, wherein is this:

"When I drew adown
The bridle brown
Grettir's hard hold,
Men deemed me bold;
Long while looked then
The brave of men
In his hollow hands,
The harm of lands.

"Then came the day
Of Thorir's play
On Ernelake-heath
When we from death
Our life must gain;

The death of Hallmund

Alone we twain
With eighty men
Must needs play then.

"Good craft enow
Did Grettir show
On many a shield
In that same field;
Natheless I hear
That my marks were
The deepest still;
The worst to fill.

"Those who were fain
His back to gain,
Lost head and hand,
Till of the band,
From the Well-wharf-side,
Must there abide
Eighteen behind
That none can find.

"With the giant's kin
Have I oft raised din;
To the rock folk
Have I dealt out stroke;
Ill things could tell
That I smote full well;
The half-trolls know
My baneful blow.

"Small gain in me
Did the elf-folk see,
Or the evil wights
Who ride anights."

* * *

Many other deeds of his did Hallmund sing in that song, for he had fared through all the land. The death of Hallmund

Then spake his daughter, "A man of no slippery hand was that; nor was it unlike that this should hap, for in evil wise didst thou begin with him: and now what man will avenge thee?"

Hallmund answered, "It is not so sure to know how that may be; but, methinks, I know that Grettir would avenge me if he might come thereto; but no easy matter will it be to go against the luck of this man, for much greatness lies stored up for him."

Thereafter so much did Hallmund's might wane as the song wore, that well-nigh at one while it befell that the song was done and Hallmund dead; then she grew very sad and wept right sore. Then came Grim forth and bade her be of better cheer, "*For all must fare when they are fetched.* This has been brought about by his own deed, for I could scarce look on while he robbed me."

She said he had much to say for it, "*For ill deed gains ill hap.*"

Now as they talked she grew of better cheer, and Grim abode many nights in the cave, and got the song by heart, and things went smoothly betwixt them.

Grim abode at Ernewaterheath all the winter after Hallmund's death, and thereafter came Thorkel Eyulfson to meet him on the Heath, and they fought together; but such was the end of their play that Grim might have his will of Thorkel's life, and slew him not. So Thorkel took him to him, and got him sent abroad and gave him many goods; and therein either was deemed to have done well to the other. Grim betook himself to seafaring, and a great tale is told of him.

Grettir beguiles Thorir of Garth

CHAPTER LXIII. HOW GRETTIR BEGUILED THORIR OF GARTH WHEN HE WAS NIGH TAKING HIM.

NOW the story is to be taken up where Grettir came from the firths of the east-country; and now he fared with hidden-head for that he would not meet Thorir, and lay out that summer on Madderdale-heath and in sundry places, and at whiles he was at Reekheath.

Thorir heard that Grettir was at Reekheath, so he gathered men and rode to the heath, and was well minded that Grettir should not escape this time.

Now Grettir was scarce aware of them before they were on him; he was just by a mountain-dairy that stood back a little from the wayside, and another man there was with him, and when he saw their band, speedy counsel must he take; so he bade that they should fell the horses and drag them into the dairy shed, and so it was done.

Then Thorir rode north over the heath by the dairy, and *missed friend from stead*, for he found nought, and so turned back withal.

But when his band had ridden away west, then said Grettir, "They will not deem their journey good if we be not found; so now shalt thou watch our horses while I go meet them, a fair play would be shown them if they knew me not."

His fellow strove to let him herein, yet he went none-the-less, and did on him other attire, with a slouched hat over his face and a staff in his hand, then he went in the way before them. They greeted him and asked if he had seen any men riding over the heath.

"Those men that ye seek have I seen; but little was wanting e'ennow but that ye found them, for there they were, on the south of yon bogs to the left."

Now when they heard that, off they galloped out on to the bogs, but so great a mire was there that nohow could they get on, and had to drag their horses out, and were wallowing there

the more part of the day; and they gave to the devil withal the wandering churl who had so befooled them. Grettir beguiles Thorir of Garth

But Grettir turned back speedily to meet his fellow, and when they met he sang this stave:

"Now make I no battle-field
With the searching stems of shield.
Rife with danger is my day,
And alone I go my way:
Nor shall I go meet, this tide,
Odin's storm, but rather bide
Whatso fate I next may have;
Scarce, then, shalt thou deem me brave.

"Thence where Thorir's company
Thronging ride, I needs must flee;
If with them I raised the din,
Little thereby should I win;
Brave men's clashing swords I shun,
Woods must hide the hunted one;
For through all things, good and ill,
Unto life shall I hold still."

Now they ride at their swiftest west over the heath and forth by the homestead at Garth, before ever Thorir came from the wilderness with his band; and when they drew nigh to the homestead a man fell in with them who knew them not.

Then saw they how a woman, young and grand of attire, stood without, so Grettir asked who that woman would be. The new-comer said that she was Thorir's daughter. Then Grettir sang this stave:

"O wise sun of golden stall,
When thy sire comes back to hall,
Thou mayst tell him without sin
This, though little lies therein,
That thou saw'st me ride hereby,

Grettir beguiles Thorir of Garth

With but two in company,
Past the door of Skeggi's son,
Nigh his hearth, O glittering one."

Hereby the new-comer thought he knew who this would be, and he rode to peopled parts and told how Grettir had ridden by.

So when Thorir came home, many deemed that Grettir had done the bed well over their heads. But Thorir set spies on Grettir's ways, whereso he might be. Grettir fell on such rede that he sent his fellow to the west country with his horses; but he went up to the mountains and was in disguised attire, and fared about north there in the early winter, so that he was not known.

But all men deemed that Thorir had got a worse part than before in their dealings together.

CHAPTER LXIV. OF THE ILL HAPS AT SAND-HEAPS, & HOW GUEST CAME TO THE GOOD-WIFE THERE.

THERE was a priest called Stein, who dwelt at Isle-dale-river, in Bard-dale; he was good at husbandry and rich in beasts; his son was Kiartan, a brisk man and a well grown. Thorstein the White was the name of him who dwelt at Sand-heaps, south of Isledale-river; his wife was called Steinvor, a young woman and merry-hearted, and children they had, who were young in those days. But that place men deemed much haunted by the goings of trolls.

Now it befell two winters before Grettir came into the north country that Steinvor the goodwife of Sand-heaps fared at Yule-tide to the stead of Isledale-river according to her wont, but the goodman abode at home. Men lay down to sleep in the evening, but in the night they heard a huge crashing about the bonder's bed; none durst arise and see thereto, for very few folk were there. In the morning the goodwife came home, but the goodman was gone, and none knew what had become of him.

Now the next year wears through its seasons; but the win-

ter after the goodwife would fain go to worship, and bade her house-carle abide behind at home; thereto was he loth, but said nathless that she must rule; so all went the same way, and the house-carle vanished; and marvellous men deemed it; but folk saw certain stains of blood about the outer door; therefore they deemed it sure that an evil wight had taken them both. Of the ill haps at Sand-heaps

Now that was heard of wide through the country-side, and Grettir withal was told thereof; so he took his way to Bard-dale, and came to Sand-heaps at Yule-eve, and made stay there, and called himself Guest. The goodwife saw that he was marvellous great of growth, but the home-folk were exceeding afeard of him; he prayed for guesting there; the mistress said that there was meat ready for him, "but as to thy safety see to that thyself."

He said that so he should do: "Here will I abide, but thou shalt go to worship if thou wilt."

She answered: "Meseems thou art a brave man if thou durst abide at home here."

"*For one thing alone will I not be known*," said he.

She said, "I have no will to abide at home, but I may not cross the river."

"I will go with thee," says Guest.

Then she made her ready for worship, and her little daughter with her. It thawed fast abroad, and the river was in flood, and therein was the drift of ice great: then said the goodwife,

"No way across is there either for man or horse."

"Nay, there will be fords there," said Guest, "be not afeard."

"Carry over the little maiden first," said the goodwife; "she is the lightest."

"I am loth to make two journeys of it," said Guest, "I will bear thee in my arms."

She crossed herself, and said, "This will not serve; what wilt thou do with the maiden?"

"A rede I see for that," said he, and therewith caught them both up, and laid the little one in her mother's lap, and

Of the ill haps at Sand-heaps

set both of them thus on his left arm, but had his right free; and so he took the ford withal, nor durst they cry out, so afeard were they.

Now the river took him up to his breast forthwith, and a great ice-floe drave against him, but he put forth the hand that was free and thrust it from him; then it grew so deep, that the stream broke on his shoulder; but he waded through it stoutly, till he came to the further shore, and there cast them a-land: then he turned back, and it was twilight already by then he came home to Sand-heaps, and called for his meat.

So when he was fulfilled, he bade the home-folk go into the chamber; then he took boards and loose timber, and dragged it athwart the chamber, and made a great bar, so that none of the home-folk might come thereover: none durst say aught against him, nor would any of them make the least sound. The entrance to the hall was through the side wall by the gable, and dais was there within; there Guest lay down, but did not put off his clothes, and light burned in the chamber over against the door: and thus Guest lay till far on in the night.

The goodwife came to Isledale-river at church-time, and men marvelled how she had crossed the river; and she said she knew not whether a man or a troll had brought her over.

The priest said he was surely a man, though a match for few; "But let us hold our peace hereon," he said, "maybe he is chosen for the bettering of thy troubles." So the goodwife was there through the night.

CHAPTER LXV. OF GUEST AND THE TROLL-WIFE.

NOW it is to be told of Guest, that when it drew towards midnight, he heard great din without, and thereafter into the hall came a huge troll-wife, with a trough in one hand and a chopper wondrous great in the other; she peered about when she came in, and saw where Guest lay, and ran at him; but he sprang up to meet her, and

they fell a-wrestling terribly, and struggled together for long in the hall. She was the stronger, but he gave back with craft, and all that was before them was broken, yea, the cross-panelling withal of the chamber. She dragged him out through the door, and so into the outer doorway, and then he betook himself to struggling hard against her. She was fain to drag him from the house, but might not until they had broken away all the fittings of the outer door, and borne them out on their shoulders: then she laboured away with him down towards the river, and right down to the deep gulfs.

By then was Guest exceeding weary, yet must he either gather his might together, or be cast by her into the gulf. All night did they contend in such wise; never, he deemed, had he fought with such a horror for her strength's sake; she held him to her so hard that he might turn his arms to no account save to keep fast hold on the middle of the witch.

But now when they came on to the gulf of the river, he gives the hag a swing round, and therewith got his right hand free, and swiftly seized the short-sword that he was girt withal, and smote the troll therewith on the shoulder, and struck off her arm; and therewithal was he free, but she fell into the gulf and was carried down the force.

Then was Guest both stiff and weary, and lay there long on the rocks; then he went home, as it began to grow light, and lay down in bed, and all swollen and blue he was.

But when the goodwife came from church, she thought her house had been somewhat roughly handled: so she went to Guest and asked what had happed that all was broken and down-trodden. He told her all as it had befallen: she deemed these things imported much, and asked him what man he was in good sooth. So he told her the truth, and prayed that the priest might be fetched, for that he would fain see him: and so it was done.

But when Stein the priest came to Sand-heaps, he knew forthwith, that thither was come Grettir Asmundson, under the name of Guest.

So the priest asked what he deemed had become of those

men who had vanished; and Grettir said that he thought they would have gone into the gulf: the priest said that he might not trow that, if no signs could be seen thereof: then said Grettir that later on that should be known more thoroughly. So the priest went home.

Grettir lay many nights a-bed, and the mistress did well to him, and so Yule-tide wore.

Now Grettir's story is that the troll-wife cast herself into the gulf when she got her wound; but the men of Bard-dale say that day dawned on her, while they wrestled, and that she burst, when he cut the arm from her; and that there she stands yet on the cliff, a rock in the likeness of a woman.

Now the dale-dwellers kept Grettir in hiding there; but in the winter after Yule, Grettir fared to Isledale-river, and when he met the priest, he said, "Well, priest, I see that thou hadst little faith in my tale; now will I, that thou go with me to the river, and see what likelihood there is of that tale being true."

So the priest did; and when they came to the force-side, they saw a cave up under the cliff; a sheer rock that cliff was, so great that in no place might man come up thereby, and well-nigh fifty fathoms was it down to the water. Now they had a rope with them, but the priest said:

"A risk beyond all measure, I deem it to go down here."

"Nay," said Grettir, "it is to be done, truly, but men of the greatest prowess are meetest therefor: now will I know what is in the force, but thou shalt watch the rope."

The priest bade him follow his own rede, and drave a peg down into the sward on the cliff, and heaped stones up over it, and sat thereby.

CHAPTER LXVI. OF THE DWELLER IN THE CAVE UNDER THE FORCE.

Of the dweller in the cave

NOW it is to be told of Grettir that he set a stone in a bight of the rope and let it sink down into the water.

"In what wise hast thou mind to go?" said the priest.

"I will not go bound into the force," said Grettir; "such things doth my heart forebode."

With that he got ready for his journey, and was lightly clad, and girt with the short-sword, and had no weapon more.

Then he leapt off the cliff into the force; the priest saw the soles of his feet, and knew not afterwards what was become of him. But Grettir dived under the force, and hard work it was, because the whirlpool was strong, and he had to dive down to the bottom, before he might come up under the force. But thereby was a rock jutting out, and thereon he gat; a great cave was under the force, and the river fell over it from the sheer rocks. He went up into the cave, and there was a great fire flaming from amidst of brands; and there he saw a giant sitting withal, marvellously great and dreadful to look on. But when Grettir came anigh, the giant leapt up and caught up a glaive and smote at the new-comer, for with that glaive might a man both cut and thrust; a wooden shaft it had, and that fashion of weapon men called then, heft-sax. Grettir hewed back against him with the short-sword, and smote the shaft so that he struck it asunder; then was the giant fain to stretch aback for a sword that hung up there in the cave; but therewithal Grettir smote him afore into the breast, and smote off well-nigh all the breast bone and the belly, so that the bowels tumbled out of him and fell into the river, and were driven down along the stream; and as the priest sat by the rope, he saw certain fibres all covered with blood swept down the swirls of the stream; then he grew unsteady in his place, and thought for sure that Grettir was dead, so he ran from the holding of the rope, and gat him home. Thither he came in the evening and said, as one who

Of the dweller in the cave

knew it well, that Grettir was dead, and that great scathe was it of such a man.

Now of Grettir must it be told that he let little space go betwixt his blows or ever the giant was dead; then he went up the cave, and kindled a light and espied the cave. The story tells not how much he got therein, but men deem that it must have been something great. But there he abode on into the night; and he found there the bones of two men, and bore them together in a bag; then he made off from the cave and swam to the rope and shook it, and thought that the priest would be there yet; but when he knew that the priest had gone home, then must he draw himself up by strength of hand, and thus he came up out on to the cliff.

Then he fared home to Isledale-river, and brought into the church porch the bag with the bones, and therewithal a rune-staff whereon this song was marvellous well cut:

"There into gloomy gulf I passed,
O'er which from the rock's throat is cast
The swirling rush of waters wan,
To meet the sword-player feared of man,
By giant's hall the strong stream pressed
Cold hands against the singer's breast;
Huge weight upon him there did hurl
The swallower of the changing whirl."

And this other one withal:

"The dreadful dweller of the cave
Great strokes and many 'gainst me drave;
Full hard he had to strive for it,
But toiling long he wan no whit;
For from its mighty shaft of tree
The heft-sax smote I speedily;
And dulled the flashing war-flame fair
In the black breast that met me there."

Herein was it said how that Grettir had brought those bones from the cave; but when the priest came to the church

in the morning he found the staff and that which went with it and read the runes; but Grettir was gone home to Sand-heaps.

Of the dweller in the cave

CHAPTER LXVII. GRETTIR DRIVEN FROM SAND-HEAPS TO THE WEST.

BUT when the priest met Grettir he asked him closely about what had happed; so he told him all the tale of his doings, and said withal that the priest had been unfaithful to him in the matter of the rope-holding; and the priest must needs say that so it was.

Now men deemed they could see that these evil wights had wrought the loss of the men there in the dale; nor had folk hurt ever after from aught haunting the valley, and Grettir was thought to have done great deeds for the cleansing of the land. So the priest laid those bones in earth in the churchyard.

But Grettir abode at Sand-heaps the winter long, and was hidden there from all the world.

But when Thorir of Garth heard certain rumours of Grettir being in Bard-dale, he sent men for his head; then men gave him counsel to get him gone therefrom, so he took his way to the west.

Now when he came to Maddervales to Gudmund the Rich, he prayed Gudmund for watch and ward; but Gudmund said he might not well keep him. "But that only is good for thee," said he, "to set thee down there, whereas thou shouldst have no fear of thy life."

Grettir said he wotted not where such a place might be.

Gudmund said, "An isle there lies in Skagafirth called Drangey; so good a place for defence it is, that no man may come thereon unless ladders be set thereto. If thou mightest get there, I know for sure that no man who might come against thee could have good hope while thou wert on the top thereof, of overcoming thee, either by weapons or craft, if so be thou shouldst watch the ladders well."

"That shall be tried," said Grettir, "but so fearsome of

Grettir driven to the West

the dark am I grown, that not even for the keeping of my life may I be alone."

Gudmund said, "Well, that may be; but trust no man whatsoever so much as not to trust thyself better; for many men are hard to see through."

Grettir thanked him for his wholesome redes, and then fared away from Maddervales, nor made stay before he came to Biarg; there his mother and Illugi his brother welcomed him joyfully, and he abode there certain nights.

There he heard of the slaying of Thorstein Kuggson, which had befallen the autumn before Grettir went to Barddale; and he deemed therewithal that felling went on fast enough.

Then Grettir rode south to Holtbeacon-heath, and was minded to avenge Hallmund if he might meet Grim; but when he came to Northriverdale, he heard that Grim had been gone two winters ago, as is aforesaid; but Grettir had heard so late of these tidings because he had gone about disguised those two winters, and the third winter he had been in Thorirsdale, and had seen no man who might tell him any news. Then he betook himself to the Broadfirth-dales, and dwelt in Eastriverdale, and lay in wait for folk who fared over Steep-brent; and once more he swept away with the strong hand the goods of the small bonders. This was about the height of summer-tide.

Now when the summer was well worn, Steinvor of Sandheaps bore a man-child, who was named Skeggi; he was first fathered on Kiartan, the son of Stein, the priest of Isledale-river. Skeggi was unlike unto his kin because of his strength and growth, but when he was fifteen winters old he was the strongest man in the north-country, and was then known as Grettir's son; men deemed he would be a marvel among men, but he died when he was seventeen years of age, and no tale there is of him.

CHAPTER LXVIII. HOW THOROD, THE SON OF SNORRI GODI, WENT AGAINST GRETTIR.

Thorod goes against Grettir

AFTER the slaying of Thorstein Kuggson, Snorri Godi would have little to do with his son Thorod, or with Sam, the son of Bork the Fat; it is not said what they had done therefor, unless it might be that they had had no will to do some great deed that Snorri set them to; but withal Snorri drave his son Thorod away, and said he should not come back till he had slain some wood-dweller; and so must matters stand.

So Thorod went over to the Dales; and at that time dwelt at Broadlair-stead in Sokkolfsdale a widow called Geirlaug; a herdsman she kept, who had heen outlawed for some onslaught; and he was a growing lad. Now Thorod Snorrison heard thereof, and rode in to Broadlair-stead, and asked where was the herdsman; the goodwife said that he was with the sheep.

"What wilt thou have to do with him?"

"His life will I have," says Thorod, "because he is an outlaw and a wood-wight."

She answers, "No glory is it for such a great warrior as thou deemest thyself, to slay a mannikin like that; I will show thee a greater deed, if thine heart is so great that thou must needs try thyself."

"Well, and what deed?" says he.

She answers, "Up in the fell here, lies Grettir Asmundson; play thou with him, for such a game is more meet for thee."

Thorod took her talk well; "So shall it be," says he, and therewith he smote his horse with his spurs, and rode along the valley; and when he came to the hill below East-river, he saw where was a dun horse, with a saddle on, and thereby a big man armed, so he turned thence to meet him.

Grettir greeted him, and asked who he was. Thorod named himself, and said,

"Why askest thou not of my errand rather than of my name?"

Thorod goes against Grettir

"Why, because," said Grettir, "it is like to be such as is of little weight: art thou son to Snorri Godi?"

"Yea, yea," says Thorod; "but now shall we try which of us may do the most."

"A matter easy to be known," says Grettir; "hast thou not heard that I have ever been a treasure-hill that most men grope in with little luck?"

"Yea, I know it," said Thorod; "yet must somewhat be risked."

And now he drew his sword therewith and set on Grettir eagerly; but Grettir warded himself with his shield, but bore no weapon against Thorod; and so things went awhile, nor was Grettir wounded.

At last he said, "Let us leave this play, for thou wilt not have victory in our strife."

But Thorod went on dealing blows at his maddest. Now Grettir got aweary of dealing with him, and caught him and set him down by his side, and said,

"I may do with thee even as I will, nor do I fear that thou wilt ever be my bane; but the grey old carle, thy father, Snorri, I fear in good sooth, and his counsels that have brought most men to their knees: and for thee, thou shouldst turn thy mind to such things alone as thou mayst get done, nor is it child's play to fight with me."

But when Thorod saw that he might bring nought to pass, he grew somewhat appeased, and therewithal they parted. Thorod rode home to Tongue and told his father of his dealings with Grettir. Snorri Godi smiled thereat, and said,

"*Many a man lies hid within himself*, and far unlike were your doings; for thou must needs rush at him to slay him, and he might have done with thee even as he would. Yet wisely has Grettir done herein, that he slew thee not; for I should scarce have had a mind to let thee lie unavenged; but now indeed shall I give him aid, if I have aught to do with any of his matters."

It was well seen of Snorri, that he deemed Grettir had done well to Thorod, and he ever after gave his good word for Grettir.

CHAPTER LXIX. HOW GRETTIR TOOK LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER AT BIARG, AND FARED WITH ILLUGI HIS BROTHER TO DRANGEY.

Grettir fares to Drangey

GRETTIR rode north to Biarg a little after he parted with Thorod, and lay hid there yet awhile; then so great grew his fear in the dark, that he durst go nowhere as soon as dusk set in. His mother bade him abide there, but said withal, that she saw that it would scarce avail him aught, since he had so many cases against him throughout all the land. Grettir said that she should never have trouble brought on her for his sake.

"But I shall no longer do so much for the keeping of my life," says he, "as to be alone."

Now Illugi his brother was by that time about fifteen winters old, and the goodliest to look on of all men; and he overheard their talk together. Grettir was telling his mother what rede Gudmund the Rich had given him, and how that he should try, if he had a chance, to get out to Drangey, but he said withal, that he might not abide there, unless he might get some trusty man to be with him. Then said Illugi,

"I will go with thee, brother, though I know not that I shall be of any help to thee, unless it be that I shall be ever true to thee, nor run from thee whiles thou standest up; and moreover I shall know more surely how thou farest if I am still in thy fellowship."

Grettir answered, "Such a man thou art, that I am gladder in thee than in any other; and if it cross not my mother's mind, fain were I that thou shouldst fare with me,"

Then said Asdis, "Now can I see that it has come to this, that two troubles lie before us: for meseems I may ill spare Illugi, yet I know that so hard is thy lot, Grettir, that thou must in somewise find rede therefor: and howsoever it grieves me, O my sons, to see you both turn your backs on me, yet thus much will I do, if Grettir might thereby be somewhat more holpen than heretofore."

Hereat was Illugi glad, for that he deemed it good to go with Grettir.

So she gave them much of her chattels, and they made them

Grettir fares to Drangey

ready for their journey. Asdis led them from out the garth, and before they parted she spake thus:

"Ah, my sons twain, there ye depart from me, and one death ye shall have together; for no man may flee from that which is wrought for him: on no day now shall I see either of you once again; let one fate be over you both, then; for I know not what weal ye go to get for yourselves in Drangey, but there shall ye both lay your bones, and many will begrudge you that abiding place. Keep ye heedfully from wiles, yet none the less there shall ye be bitten of the edge of the sword, for marvellously have my dreams gone: be well ware of sorcery, for *little can cope with the cunning of eld*."

And when she had thus spoken she wept right sore.

Then said Grettir, "Weep not, mother, for if we be set on with weapons, it shall be said of thee, that thou hast had sons, and not daughters: live on, well and hale."

Therewithal they parted. They fared north through the country-side and saw their kin; and thus they lingered out the autumn into winter; then they turned toward Skagafirth and went north through Waterpass and thence to Reek-pass, and down Sæmunds-lithe and so unto Longholt, and came to Dinby late in the day.

Grettir had cast his hood back on to his shoulders, for in that wise he went over abroad whether the day were better or worse. So they went thence, and when they had gone but a little way, there met them a man, big-headed, tall, and gaunt, and ill clad; he greeted them, and either asked other for their names; they said who they were, but he called himself Thorbiorn: he was a land-louper, a man too lazy to work, and a great swaggerer, and much game and fooling was made with him by some folk: he thrust himself into their company, and told them much from the upper country about the folk there. Grettir had great game and merriment of him; so he asked if they had no need of a man who should work for them, "for I would fain fare with you," says he; and withal he got so much from their talk that they suffered him to follow them.

Much snow there was that day, and it was cold; but whereas

that man swaggered exceedingly, and was the greatest of tomfools, he had a by-name, and was called Noise. Grettir fares to Drangey

"Great wonder had those of Dinby when thou wentest by e'en now unhooded, in the foul weather," said Noise, "as to whether thou wouldst have as little fear of men as of the cold: there were two bonders' sons, both men of great strength, and the shepherd called them forth to go to the sheep-watching with him, and scarcely could they clothe themselves for the cold."

Grettir said, "I saw within doors there a young man who pulled on his mittens, and another going betwixt byre and midden, and of neither of them should I be afeared."

Thereafter they went down to Sorbness, and were there through the night; then they fared out along the strand to a farm called Reeks, where dwelt a man, Thorwald by name, a good bonder. Him Grettir prayed for watch and ward, and told him how he was minded to get out to Drangey: the bonder said that those of Skagafirth would think him no godsend, and excused himself therewithal.

Then Grettir took a purse his mother had given to him, and gave it to the bonder; his brows lightened over the money, and he got three house-carles of his to bring them out in the night time by the light of the moon. It is but a little way from Reeks out to the island, one sea-mile only. So when they came to the isle, Grettir deemed it good to behold, because it was grass-grown, and rose up sheer from the sea, so that no man might come up thereon save there where the ladders were let down, and if the uppermost ladder were drawn up, it was no man's deed to get upon the island. There also were the cliffs full of fowl in the summer-tide, and there were eighty sheep upon the island which the bonders owned, and they were mostly rams and ewes which they had mind to slaughter.

There Grettir set himself down in peace; and by then had he been fifteen or sixteen winters in outlawry, as Sturla Thordson has said.

Of the bonders of Drangey

CHAPTER LXX. OF THE BONDERS WHO OWNED DRANGEY BETWEEN THEM.

IN the days when Grettir came to Drangey, these were chief men of the country-side of Skagafirth.

Hialti dwelt at Hof in Hialtidale, he was the son of Thord, the son of Hialti, the son of Thord the Scalp: Hialti was a great chief, a right noble man, and much befriended. Thorbiorn Angle was the name of his brother, a big man and a strong, hardy and wild withal. Thord, the father of these twain, had married again in his old age, and that wife was not the mother of the brothers; and she did ill to her step-children, but served Thorbiorn the worst, for that he was hard to deal with and reckless. And on a day Thorbiorn Angle sat playing at tables, and his stepmother passed by and saw that he was playing at the knave-game, and the fashion of the game was the large tail-game. Now she deemed him thriftless, and cast some word at him, but he gave an evil answer; so she caught up one of the men, and drave the tail thereof into Thorbiorn's cheek-bone wherefrom it glanced into his eye, so that it hung out on his cheek. He sprang up, caught hold of her, and handled her roughly, insomuch that she took to her bed, and died thereof afterwards, and folk say that she was then big with child.

Thereafter Thorbiorn became of all men the most riotous; he took his heritage, and dwelt at first in Woodwick.

Haldor the son of Thord, who was the son of Head-Thord, dwelt at Hof on Head-strand, he had to wife Thordis, the daughter of Thord Hialtison, and sister to those brothers Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle. Haldor was a great bonder, and rich in goods.

Biorn was the name of a man who dwelt at Meadness in the Fleets; he was a friend to Haldor of Hof. These men held to each other in all cases.

Tongue-Stein dwelt at Stonestead; he was the son of Biorn, the son of Ufeigh Thin-beard, son of that Crow-Hreidar to whom Eric of God-dales gave the tongue of land down from Hall-marsh. Stein was a man of great renown.

One named Eric was the son of Holmgang-Starri, the son of Eric of God-dales, the son of Hroald, the son of Geirmund Thick-beard; Eric dwelt at Hof in God-dales. Of the bonders of Drangey

Now all these were men of great account.

Two brothers there were who dwelt at a place called Broad-river in Flat-lithe, and they were both called Thord; they were wondrous strong, and yet withal peaceable men both of them.

All these men had share in Drangey, and it is said that no less than twenty in all had some part in the island, nor would any sell his share to another; but the sons of Thord, Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle, had the largest share, because they were the richest men.

CHAPTER LXXI. HOW THOSE OF SKAGAFIRTH FOUND GRETTIR ON DRANGEY.

NOW time wears on towards the winter solstice; then the bonders get ready to go fetch the fat beasts for slaughter from the island; so they manned a great barge, and every owner had one to go in his stead, and some two.

But when these came anigh the island they saw men going about there; they deemed that strange, but guessed that men had been shipwrecked, and got aland there: so they row up to where the ladders were, when lo, the firstcomers drew up the ladders.

Then the bonders deemed that things were taking a strange turn, and hailed those men and asked them who they were: Grettir named himself and his fellows withal: but the bonders asked who had brought him there.

Grettir answered, "He who owned the keel and had the hands, and who was more my friend than yours."

The bonders answered and said, "Let us now get our sheep, but come thou aland with us, keeping freely whatso of our sheep thou hast slaughtered."

"A good offer," said Grettir, "but this time let each keep what he has got; and I tell you, once for all, that hence I go

How those of Skaga-firth found Grettir on Drangey

not, till I am dragged away dead; for it is not my way to let that go loose which I have once laid hand on."

Thereat the bonders held their peace, and deemed that a woeful guest had come to Drangey; then they gave him choice of many things, both moneys and fair words, but Grettir said nay to one and all, and they gat them gone with things in such a stead, and were ill content with their fate; and told the men of the country-side what a wolf had got on to the island.

This took them all unawares, but they could think of nought to do herein; plentifully they talked over it that winter, but could see no rede whereby to get Grettir from the island.

CHAPTER LXXII. OF THE SPORTS AT HERON-NESS THING.

NOW the days wore till such time as men went to the Heron-ness Thing in spring-tide, and many came thronging there from that part of the country, wherefrom men had to go to that Thing for their suits. Men sat there long time both over the suits and over sports, for there were many blithe men in that country-side. But when Grettir heard that all men fared to the Thing, he made a plot with his friends; for he was in goodwill with those who dwelt nighest to him, and for them he spared nought that he could get. But now he said that he would go aland, and gather victuals, but that Illugi and Noise should stay behind. Illugi thought this ill counselled, but let things go as Grettir would.

So Grettir bade them watch the ladders well, for that all things lay thereon; and thereafter he went to the mainland, and got what he deemed needful: he hid himself from men whereso he came, nor did anyone know that he was on the land. Withal he heard concerning the Thing, that there was much sport there, and was fain to go thither; so he did on old gear and evil, and thus came to the Thing, whenas men went from the courts home to their booths. Then fell certain young men to talking how that the day was fair and good, and that

it were well, belike, for the young men to betake them to wrestling and merrymaking. Folk said it was well counselled; and so men went and sat them down out from the booths. Of the sports at Heron-ness Thing

Now the sons of Thord, Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle, were the chief men in this sport; Thorbiorn Angle was boisterous beyond measure, and drove men hard and fast to the place of the sports, and every man must needs go whereas his will was; and he would take this man and that by the hands and drag him forth unto the playing-ground.

Now first those wrestled who were weakest, and then each man in his turn, and therewith the game and glee waxed great; but when most men had wrestled but those who were the strongest, the bonders fell to talking as to who would be like to lay hand to either of the Thords, who have been aforenamed; but there was no man ready for that. Then the Thords went up to sundry men, and put themselves forward for wrestling, but *the nigher the call the further the man.* Then Thorbiorn Angle looks about, and sees where a man sits, great of growth, and his face hidden somewhat. Thorbiorn laid hold of him, and tugged hard at him, but he sat quiet and moved no whit. Then said Thorbiorn,

"No one has kept his place before me to-day like thou hast; what man art thou?"

He answers, "Guest am I hight."

Said Thorbiorn, "Belike thou wilt do somewhat for our merriment; a wished-for guest wilt thou be."

He answered, "About and about, methinks, will things change speedily; nor shall I cast myself into play with you here, where all is unknown to me."

Then many men said he were worthy of good at their hands, if he, an unknown man, gave sport to the people. Then he asked what they would of him; so they prayed him to wrestle with some one.

He said he had left wrestling, "though time agone it was somewhat of a sport to me."

So, when he did not deny them utterly, they prayed him thereto yet the more.

He said, "Well, if ye are so fain that I be dragged about

Of the sports at Heron-ness Thing

here, ye must do so much therefor, as to handsel me peace, here at the Thing, and until such time as I come back to my home."

Then they all sprang up and said that so they would do indeed; but Hafr was the name of him who urged most that peace should be given to the man. This Hafr was the son of Thorarin, the son of Hafr, the son of Thord Knob, who had settled land up from the Weir in the Fleets to Tongue-river, and who dwelt at Knobstead; and a wordy man was Hafr.

So now he gave forth the handselling grandly with open mouth, and this is the beginning thereof.

CHAPTER LXXIII. THE HANDSELLING OF PEACE.

SAYS he, "Herewith I establish peace betwixt all men, but most of all betwixt all men and this same Guest who sits here, and so is named; that is to say, all men of rule, and goodly bonders, and all men young, and fit to bear arms, and all other men of the country-side of Heron-ness Thing, whencesoever any may have come here, of men named or unnamed. Let us handsel safety and full peace to that unknown newcomer, yclept Guest by name, for game, wrestling, and all glee, for abiding here, and going home, whether he has need to fare over water, or over land, or over ferry; safety shall he have, in all steads named and unnamed, even so long as needs be for his coming home whole, under faith holden. This peace I establish on behoof of us, and of our kin, friends, and men of affinity, women even as men, bondswomen even as bondsmen, swains and men of estate. Let him be a shamed peace-breaker, who breaks the peace, or spills the troth settled; turned away and driven forth from God, and good men, of the kingdom of Heaven, and all Holy ones. A man not to be borne of any man, but cast out from all, as wide as wolves stray, or Christian men make for Churches, or heathen in God's-houses do sacrifice, or fire burns, or earth brings forth, or a child, new-come to speech, calls mother, or mother bears son, or the sons of men kindle fire, or ships sweep on, or

shields glitter, or the sun shines, or the snow falls, or a Finn sweeps on skates, or a fir-tree waxes, or a falcon flies the spring-long day with a fair wind under either wing, or the Heavens dwindle far away, or the world is built, or the wind turns waters seaward, or carles sow corn. Let him shun churches, and Christian folk, and heathen men, houses and caves, and every home but the home of Hell. Now shall we be at peace and of one mind each with the other, and of good-will, whether we meet on fell or foreshore, ship or snow-shoes, earth or ice-mount, sea or swift steed, even as each found his friend in water, or his brother on broad ways; in just such peace one with other, as father with son, or son with father in all dealings together. Now we lay hands together, each and all of us, to hold well this say of peace, and all words spoken in our settled troth: As witness God and good men, and all those who hear my words, and nigh this stead chance to stand."

The hand-selling of Peace

CHAPTER LXXIV. OF GRETTIR'S WRESTLING: AND HOW THORBIORN ANGLE NOW BOUGHT THE MORE PART OF DRANGEY.

THEN many fell to saying that many and great words had been spoken hereon; but now Guest said,

"Good is thy say and well hast thou spoken it; if ye spill not things hereafter, I shall not withhold that which I have to show forth."

So he cast off his hood, and therewith all his outer clothes.

Then they gazed one on the other, and awe spread over their faces, for they deemed they knew surely that this was Grettir Asmundson, for that he was unlike other men for his growth and prowess' sake: and all stood silent, but Hafr deemed he had made himself a fool. Now the men of the country-side fell into twos and twos together, and one upbraided the other, but him the most of all, who had given forth the words of peace.

Then said Grettir; "Make clear to me what ye have in your minds, because for no long time will I sit thus unclad;

Of Grettir's wrestling

it is more your matter than mine, whether ye will hold the peace, or hold it not."

They answered few words and then sat down: and now the sons of Thord, and Halldor their brother-in-law, talked the matter over together; and some would hold the peace, and some not; so as they elbowed one another, and laid their heads together, Grettir sang a stave:

"I, well known to men, have been
On this morn both hid and seen;
Double face my fortune wears,
Evil now, now good it bears;
Doubtful play-board have I shown
Unto these men, who have grown
Doubtful of their given word;
Hafr's big noise goes overboard."

Then said Tongue-Stein, "Thinkest thou that, Grettir? Knowest thou then what the chiefs will make their minds up to? but true it is thou art a man above all others for thy great heart's sake: yea, but dost thou not see how they rub their noses one against the other?"

Then Grettir sang a stave:

"Raisers-up of roof of war
Nose to nose in counsel are;
Wakeners of the shield-rain sit
Wagging beard to talk of it:
Scatterers of the serpent's bed
Round about lay head to head.
For belike they heard my name;
And must balance peace and shame."

Then spake Hialti the son of Thord; "So shall it not be," says he; "we shall hold to our peace and troth given, though we have been beguiled, for I will not that men should have such a deed to follow after, if we depart from that peace, that we ourselves have settled and handselled: Grettir shall go whither he will, and have peace until such time as he comes

back from this journey; and then and not till then shall this word of truce be void, whatsoever may befall betwixt us meanwhile."

Of Grettir's wrestling

All thanked him therefor, and deemed that he had done as a great chief, such blood-guilt as there was on the other side: but the speech of Thorbiorn Angle was little and low thereupon.

Now men said that both the Thords should lay hand to Grettir, and he bade them have it as they would: so one of the brothers stood forth; and Grettir stood up stiff before him, and he ran at Grettir at his briskest, but Grettir moved no whit from his place: then Grettir stretched out his hand down Thord's back, over the head of him, and caught hold of him by the breeches, and tripped up his feet, and cast him backward over his head in such wise that he fell on his shoulder, and a mighty fall was that.

Then men said that both those brothers should go against Grettir at once; and thus was it done, and great swinging and pulling about there was, now one side, now the other getting the best of it, though one or other of the brothers Grettir ever had under him; but each in turn must fall on his knee, or have some slip one of the other; and so hard they griped each at each, that they were all blue and bruised.

All men thought this the best of sport, and when they had made an end of it, thanked them for the wrestling; and it was the deeming of those who sat thereby, that the two brothers together were no stronger than Grettir alone, though each of them had the strength of two men of the strongest: so evenly matched they were withal, that neither might get the better of the other if they tried it between them.

Grettir abode no long time at the Thing; the bonders bade him give up the island, but he said nay to this, nor might they do aught herein.

So Grettir fared back to Drangey, and Illugi was as fain of him as might be; and there they abode peacefully, and Grettir told them the story of his doings and his journeys; and thus the summer wore away.

Of Grettir's wrestling

All men deemed that those of Skagafirth had shown great manliness herein, that they held to their peace given; and folk may well mark how trusty men were in those days, whereas Grettir had done such deeds against them.

Now the less rich men of the bonders spake together, that there was little gain to them in holding small shares in Drangey; so they offered to sell their part to the sons of Thord; Hialti said that he would not deal with them herein, for the bonders made it part of the bargain, that he who bought of them should either slay Grettir or get him away. But Thorbiorn Angle said, that he would not spare to take the lead of an onset against Grettir if they would give him wealth therefor. So his brother Hialti gave up to him his share in the island, for that he was the hardest man, and the least befriended of the twain; and in likewise too did other bonders; so Thorbiorn Angle got the more part of the island for little worth, but bound himself withal to get Grettir away.

CHAPTER LXXV. THORBIORN ANGLE GOES TO DRANGEY TO SPEAK WITH GRETTIR.

WHENAS summer was far spent, Thorbiorn Angle went with a well-manned barge out to Drangey, and Grettir and his fellows stood forth on the cliff's edge; so there they talked together. Thorbiorn prayed Grettir to do so much for his word, as to depart from the island; Grettir said there was no hope of such an end.

Then said Thorbiorn, "Belike I may give thee meet aid if thou dost this, for now have many bonders given up to me their shares in the island."

Grettir answered, "Now hast thou shown forth that which brings me to settle in my mind that I will never go hence, whereas thou sayest that thou now hast the more part of the island; and good is it that we twain alone share the kale; for in sooth, hard I found it to have all the men of Skagafirth against me; but now let neither spare the other, for not such are we twain, as are like to be smothered in the friendship of men; and thou mayst leave coming hither, for on my side is all over and done."

"*All things bide their day*," said Thorbiorn, "and an ill day thou bidest."

"I am content to risk it," said Grettir; and in such wise they parted, and Thorbiorn went home.

Noise lets the fire out on Drangey

CHAPTER LXXVI. HOW NOISE LET THE FIRE OUT ON DRANGEY, AND HOW GRETTIR MUST NEEDS GO ALAND FOR MORE.

SO the tale tells, that by then they had been two winters on Drangey, they had slaughtered well-nigh all the sheep that were there, but one ram, as men say, they let live; he was piebald of belly and head, and exceeding big-horned; great game they had of him, for he was so wise that he would stand waiting without, and run after them whereso they went; and he would come home to the hut a-nights and rub his horns against the door.

Now they deemed it good to abide on the island, for food was plenty, because of the fowl and their eggs; but fire-wood was right hard to come by; and ever Grettir would let the thrall go watch for drift, and logs were often drifted there, and he would bear them to the fire; but no need had the brothers to do any work beyond climbing into the cliffs when it liked them. But the thrall took to loathing his work, and got more grumbling and heedless than he was wont heretofore: his part it was to watch the fire night by night, and Grettir gave him good warning thereon, for no boat they had with them.

Now so it befell that on a certain night their fire went out; Grettir was wroth thereat, and said it was but his due if Noise were beaten for that deed; but the thrall said that his life was an evil life, if he must lie there in outlawry, and be shaken and beaten withal if aught went amiss.

Grettir asked Illugi what rede there was for the matter, but he said he could see none, but that they should abide there till some keel should be brought thither: Grettir said it was but blindness to hope for that. "Rather will I risk whether I may not come aland."

"Much my mind misgives me thereof," said Illugi, "for we are all lost if thou comest to any ill."

Noise lets the fire out on Drangey

"I shall not be swallowed up swimming," said Grettir; "but henceforward I shall trust the thrall the worse for this, so much as lies hereon."

Now the shortest way to the mainland from the island, was a sea-mile long.

CHAPTER LXXVII. GRETTIR AT THE HOMESTEAD OF REEKS.

NOW Grettir got all ready for swimming, and had on a cowl of market-wadmal, and his breeches girt about him, and he got his fingers webbed together, and the weather was fair. So he went from the island late in the day, and desperate Illugi deemed his journey. Grettir made out into the bay, and the stream was with him, and a calm was over all. He swam on fast, and came aland at Reekness by then the sun had set: he went up to the homestead at Reeks, and into a bath that night, and then went into the chamber; it was very warm there, for there had been a fire therein that evening, and the heat was not yet out of the place; but he was exceeding weary, and there fell into a deep sleep, and so lay till far on into the next day.

Now as the morning wore the home folk arose, and two women came into the chamber, a handmaid and the goodman's daughter. Grettir was asleep, and the bedclothes had been cast off him on to the floor; so they saw that a man lay there, and knew him.

Then said the handmaiden: "So may I thrive, sister! here is Grettir Asmundson lying bare, and I call him right well ribbed about the chest, but few might think he would be so small of growth below; and so then that does not go along with other kinds of bigness."

The goodman's daughter answered: "Why wilt thou have everything on thy tongue's end? Thou art a measureless fool; be still."

"Dear sister, how can I be still about it?" says the handmaid. "I would not have believed it, though one had told me."

And now she would whiles run up to him and look, and

whiles run back again to the goodman's daughter, screaming and laughing; but Grettir heard what she said, and as she ran in over the floor by him he caught hold of her, and sang this stave: Grettir at the homestead of Reeks

"Stay a little, foolish one!
When the shield-shower is all done,
With the conquered carles and lords,
Men bide not to measure swords:
Many a man had there been glad,
Lesser war-gear to have had,
With a heart more void of fear;
Such I am not, sweet and dear."

Therewithal he swept her up into the bed, but the bonder's daughter ran out of the place; then sang Grettir this other stave:

"Sweet amender of the seam,
Weak and worn thou dost me deem:
O light-handed dear delight,
Certes thou must say aright.
Weak I am, and certainly
Long in white arms must I lie:
Hast thou heart to leave me then,
Fair-limbed gladdener of great men?"

The handmaid shrieked out, but in such wise did they part that she laid no blame on Grettir when all was over.

A little after, Grettir arose, and went to Thorvald the goodman, and told him of his trouble, and prayed bring him out; so did he, and lent him a boat, and brought him out, and Grettir thanked him well for his manliness.

But when it was heard that Grettir had swam a sea-mile, all deemed his prowess both on sea and land to be marvellous.

Those of Skagafirth had many words to say against Thorbiorn Angle, in that he drave not Grettir away from Drangey, and said they would take back each his own share; but he said he found the task no easy one, and prayed them be good to him, and abide awhile.

Hæring at Drangey

CHAPTER LXXVIII. OF HÆRING AT DRANGEY, AND THE END OF HIM.

THAT same summer a ship came to the Gangpass-mouth, and therein was a man called Hæring—a young man he was, and so lithe that there was no cliff that he might not climb. He went to dwell with Thorbiorn Angle, and was there on into the autumn; and he was ever urging Thorbiorn to go to Drangey, saying that he would fain see whether the cliffs were so high that none might come up them. Thorbiorn said that he should not work for nought if he got up unto the island, and slew Grettir, or gave him some wound; and withal he made it worth coveting to Hæring. So they fared to Drangey, and set the eastman ashore in a certain place, and he was to set on them unawares if he might come up on to the island, but they laid their keel by the ladders, and fell to talking with Grettir; and Thorbiorn asked him if he were minded now to leave the place; but he said that to nought was his mind so made up as to stay there.

"A great game hast thou played with us," said Thorbiorn; "but thou seemest not much afeard for thyself."

Thus a long while they gave and took in words, and came nowise together hereon.

But of Hæring it is to be told that he climbed the cliffs, going on the right hand and the left, and got up by such a road as no man has gone by before or since; but when he came to the top of the cliff, he saw where the brothers stood, with their backs turned toward him, and thought in a little space to win both goods and great fame; nor were they at all aware of his ways, for they deemed that no man might come up, but there whereas the ladders were. Grettir was talking with Thorbiorn, nor lacked there words of the biggest on either side; but withal Illugi chanced to look aside, and saw a man drawing anigh them.

Then he said, "Here comes a man at us, with axe raised aloft, and in right warlike wise he seems to fare."

"Turn thou to meet him," says Grettir, "but I will watch the ladders." Hæring at Drangey

So Illugi turned to meet Hæring, and when the eastman saw him, he turned and fled here and there over the island. Illugi chased him while the island lasted, but when he came forth on to the cliff's edge Hæring leapt down thence, and every bone in him was broken, and so ended his life; but the place where he was lost has been called Hæring's-leap ever since.

Illugi came back, and Grettir asked how he had parted from this one who had doomed them to die.

"He would have nought to do," says Illugi, "with my seeing after his affairs, but must needs break his neck over the rock; so let the bonders pray for him as one dead."

So when Angle heard that, he bade his folk make off. "Twice have I fared to meet Grettir, but no third time will I go, if I am nought the wiser first; and now belike they may sit in Drangey as for me; but in my mind it is, that Grettir will abide here but a lesser time than heretofore."

With that they went home, and men deemed this journey of theirs worser than the first, and Grettir abode that winter in Drangey, nor in that season did he and Thorbiorn meet again.

In those days died Skapti Thorodson the Lawman, and great scathe was that to Grettir, for he had promised to busy himself about his acquittal as soon as he had been twenty winters in outlawry, and this year, of which the tale was told e'en now, was the nineteenth year thereof.

In the spring died Snorri the Godi, and many matters befell in that season that come not into this story.

Of the talk about Grettir's outlawry

CHAPTER LXXIX. OF THE TALK AT THE THING ABOUT GRETTIR'S OUTLAWRY.

THAT summer, at the Althing, the kin of Grettir spake many things concerning his outlawry, and some deemed he had outworn the years thereof, if he had come at all into the twentieth year; but they who had blood-suits against him would not have it so, and said, that he had done many an outlaw's deed since he was first outlawed, and deemed his time ought to last longer therefor.

At that time was a new lawman made, Stein, the son of Thorgest, the son of Stein the Far-sailing, the son of Thorir Autumn-mirk; the mother of Stein was Arnora, the daughter of Thord the Yeller; and Stein was a wise man.

Now was he prayed for the word of decision; and he bade them search and see whether this were the twentieth summer since Grettir was made an outlaw, and thus it seemed to be.

But then stood forth Thorir of Garth, and brought all into dispute again, for he found that Grettir had been one winter out here a sackless man, amidst the times of his outlawry, and then nineteen were the winters of his outlawry found to be. Then said the Lawman that no one should be longer in outlawry than twenty winters in all, though he had done outlaw's deeds in that time.

"But before that, I declare no man sackless."

Now because of this was the acquittal delayed for this time, but it was thought a sure thing that he would be made sackless the next summer. But that misliked the Skagafirthers exceeding ill, if Grettir were to come out of his outlawry, and they bade Thorbiorn Angle do one of two things, either give back the island or slay Grettir; but he deemed that he had a work on his hands, for he saw no rede for the winning of Grettir, and yet was he fain to hold the island; and so all manner of craft he sought for the overcoming of Grettir, if he might prevail either by guile or hardihood, or in any wise soever.

CHAPTER LXXX. THORBIORN ANGLE GOES WITH HIS FOSTER-MOTHER OUT TO DRANGEY.

Thorbiorn Angle goes to Drangey

THORBIORN Angle had a foster-mother, Thurid by name, exceeding old, and meet for little, as folk deemed, very cunning she had been in many and great matters of lore, when she was young, and men were yet heathen; but men thought of her as of one who had lost all that. But now though Christ's law were established in the land, yet abode still many sparks of heathendom. It had been law in the land, that men were not forbidden to sacrifice secretly, or deal with other lore of eld, but it was lesser outlawry if such doings oozed out. Now in such wise it fared with many, that *hand for wont did yearn*, and things grew handiest by time that had been learned in youth.

So now, whenas Thorbiorn Angle was empty of all plots, he sought for help there, whereas most folk deemed it most unlike that help was—at the hands of his foster-mother, in sooth, and asked, what counsel was in her therefor.

She answered, "Now belike matters have come to this, even as the saw says, *To the goat-house for wool:* but what could I do less than this, to think myself before folk of the country-side, but be a man of nought, whenso anything came to be tried? nor see I how I may fare worse than thou, though I may scarce rise from my bed. But if thou art to have my rede, then shall I have my will as to how and what things are done."

He gave his assent thereto, and said that she had long been of wholesome counsel to him.

Now the time wore on to Twain-month of summer; and one fair-weather day the carline spake to Angle,

"Now is the weather calm and bright, and I will now that thou fare to Drangey and pick a quarrel with Grettir; I shall go with thee, and watch how heedful he may be of his words; and if I see them, I shall have some sure token as to how far they are befriended of fortune, and then shall I speak over them such words as seem good to me."

Thorbiorn Angle goes to Drangey

Angle answered, "Loth am I to be faring to Drangey, for ever am I of worser mind when I depart thence than when I come thereto."

Then said the carline, "Nought will I do for thee if thou sufferest me to rule in no wise."

"Nay, so shall it not be, foster-mother," said he; "but so much have I said, as that I would so come thither the third time that somewhat should be made of the matter betwixt us."

"The chance of that must be taken," said the carline, "and many a heavy labour must thou have, or ever Grettir be laid to earth; and oft will it be doubtful to thee what fortune thine shall be, and heavy troubles wilt thou get therefrom when that is done; yet art thou so bounden hereunder, that to somewhat must thou make up thy mind."

Thereafter Thorbiorn Angle let put forth a ten-oared boat, and he went thereon with eleven men, and the carline was in their company.

So they fell to rowing as the weather went, out to Drangey; and when the brothers saw that, they stood forth at the ladders, and they began to talk the matter over yet once more; and Thorbiorn said, that he was come yet again, to talk anew of their leaving the island, and that he would deal lightly with his loss of money and Grettir's dwelling there, if so be they might part without harm. But Grettir said that he had no words to make atwixt and atween of his going thence.

"Oft have I so said," says he, "and no need there is for thee to talk to me thereon; ye must even do as ye will, but here will I abide, whatso may come to hand."

Now Thorbiorn deemed, that this time also his errand was come to nought, and he said,

"Yea, I deemed I knew with what men of hell I had to do; and most like it is that a day or two will pass away ere I come hither again."

"I account that not in the number of my griefs, though thou never comest back," said Grettir.

Now the carline lay in the stern, with clothes heaped up about and over her, and with that she moved, and said,

"Brave will these men be, and luckless withal; far hast thou outdone them in manliness; thou biddest them choice of many goodly things, but they say nay to all, and few things lead surer to ill, than not to know how to take good. Now this I cast over thee, Grettir, that thou be left of all health, wealth, and good-hap, all good heed and wisdom: yea, and that the more, the longer thou livest; good hope I have, Grettir, that thy days of gladness shall be fewer here in time to come than in the time gone by." Thorbiorn Angle goes to Drangey

Now when Grettir heard these words, he was astonied withal, and said,

"What fiend is there in the boat with them?"

Illugi answers, "I deem that it will be the carline, Thorbiorn's foster-mother."

"Curses on the witch-wight!" says Grettir, "nought worse could have been looked for; at no words have I shuddered like as I shuddered at those words she spake; and well I wot that from her, and her foul cunning, some evil will be brought on us; yet shall she have some token to mind her that she has sought us here."

Therewithal he caught up a marvellous great stone, and cast it down on to the boat, and it smote that clothes-heap; and a longer stone-throw was that than Thorbiorn deemed any man might make; but therewithal a great shriek arose, for the stone had smitten the carline's thigh, and broken it.

Then said Illugi, "I would thou hadst not done that!"

"Blame me not therefor," said Grettir, "I fear me the stroke has been too little, for certes not overmuch weregild were paid for the twain of us, though the price should be one carline's life."

"Must she alone be paid?" said Illugi, "little enough then will be laid down for us twain."

Now Thorbiorn got him gone homeward, with no greetings at parting. But he said to the carline,

"Now have matters gone as I thought, that a journey of little glory thou shouldst make to the island; thou hast got maimed, and honour is no nigher to us than before, yea, we must have bootless shame on bootless shame."

Thorbiorn Angle goes to Drangey

She answered, "This will be the springing of ill-hap to them; and I deem that henceforth they are on the wane; neither do I fear if I live, but that I shall have revenge for this deed they have thus done me."

"Stiff is thine heart, meseems, foster-mother," said Thorbiorn. With that they came home, but the carline was laid in her bed, and abode there nigh a month; by then was the hurt thigh-bone grown together again, and she began to be afoot once more.

Great laughter men made at that journey of Thorbiorn and the carline, and deemed he had been often enow outplayed in his dealings with Grettir: first, at the Spring-Thing in the peace handselling; next, when Hæring was lost, and now again, this third time, when the carline's thigh-bone was broken, and no stroke had been played against these from his part. But great shame and grief had Thorbiorn Angle from all these words.

CHAPTER LXXXI. OF THE CARLINE'S EVIL GIFT TO GRETTIR.

NOW wore away the time of autumn till it wanted but three weeks of winter; then the carline bade bear her to the sea-shore. Thorbiorn asked what she would there.

"Little is my errand, yet maybe," she says, "it is a foreboding of greater tidings."

Now was it done as she bade, and when she came down to the strand, she went limping along by the sea, as if she were led thereto, unto a place where lay before her an uprooted tree, as big as a man might bear on his shoulder. She looked at the tree and bade them turn it over before her eyes, and on one side it was as if singed and rubbed; so there whereas it was rubbed she let cut a little flat space; and then she took her knife and cut runes on the root, and made them red with her blood, and sang witch-words over them; then she went backwards and widdershins round about the tree, and cast over it many a strong spell; thereafter she let thrust the tree

forth into the sea, and spake in such wise over it, that it should drive out to Drangey, and that Grettir should have all hurt therefrom that might be. Thereafter she went back home to Woodwick; and Thorbiorn said that he knew not if that would come to aught; but the carline answered that he should wot better anon. Of the Carline's gift to Grettir

Now the wind blew landward up the firth, yet the carline's root went in the teeth of the wind, and belike it sailed swifter than might have been looked for of it.

Grettir abode in Drangey with his fellows as is aforesaid, and in good case they were; but the day after the carline had wrought her witch-craft on the tree the brothers went down below the cliffs searching for firewood, so when they came to the west of the island, there they found that tree drifted ashore.

Then said Illugi, "A big log of firewood, kinsman, let us bear it home."

Grettir kicked it with his foot and said, "An evil tree from evil sent; other firewood than this shall we have."

Therewithal he cast it out into the sea, and bade Illugi beware of bearing it home, "For it is sent us for our ill-hap." And therewith they went unto their abode, and said nought about it to the thrall. But the next day they found the tree again, and it was nigher to the ladders than heretofore; Grettir drave it out to sea, and said that it should never be borne home.

Now the days wore on into summer, and a gale came on with much wet, and the brothers were loth to be abroad, and bade Noise go search for firewood.

He took it ill, and said he was ill served in that he had to drudge and labour abroad in all the foulest weather; but withal he went down to the beach before the ladders and found the carline's tree there, and deemed things had gone well because of it; so he took it up and bore it to the hut, and cast it down thereby with a mighty thump.

Grettir heard it and said, "Noise has got something, so I shall go out and see what it is."

Of the Carline's gift to Grettir

Therewithal he took up a wood-axe, and went out, and straightway Noise said,

"Split it up in as good wise as I have brought it home, then."

Grettir grew short of temper with the thrall, and smote the axe with both hands at the log, nor heeded what tree it was; but as soon as ever the axe touched the wood, it turned flatlings and glanced off therefrom into Grettir's right leg above the knee, in such wise that it stood in the bone, and a great wound was that. Then he looked at the tree and said,

"Now has evil heart prevailed, nor will this hap go alone, since that same tree has now come back to us that I have cast out to sea on these two days. But for thee, Noise, two slips hast thou had, first, when thou must needs let the fire be slaked, and now this bearing home of that tree of ill-hap; but if a third thou hast, thy bane will it be, and the bane of us all."

With that came Illugi and bound up Grettir's hurt, and it bled little, and Grettir slept well that night; and so three nights slipped by in such wise that no pain came of the wound, and when they loosed the swathings, the lips of the wound were come together so that it was well-nigh grown over again. Then said Illugi,

"Belike thou wilt have no long hurt of this wound."

"Well were it then," said Grettir, "but marvellously has this befallen, whatso may come of it; and my mind misgives me of the way things will take."

CHAPTER LXXXII. GRETTIR SINGS OF HIS GREAT DEEDS.

NOW they lay them down that evening, but at midnight Grettir began to tumble about exceedingly. Illugi asked why he was so unquiet. Grettir said that his leg had taken to paining him, "And methinks it is like that some change of hue there be therein."

Then they kindled a light, and when the swathings were undone, the leg showed all swollen and coal-blue, and the wound had broken open, and was far more evil of aspect than

at first; much pain there went therewith so that he might not abide at rest in any wise, and never came sleep on his eyes. Grettir sings of his deeds

Then spake Grettir, "Let us make up our minds to it, that this sickness which I have gotten is not done for nought, for it is of sorcery, and the carline is minded to avenge her of that stone."

Illugi said, "Yea, I told thee that thou wouldst get no good from that hag."

"*All will come to one end*," said Grettir, and sang this song withal:

"Doubtful played the foredoomed fate
Round the sword in that debate,
When the bearserks' outlawed crew
In the days of yore I slew.
Screamed the worm of clashing lands
When Hiarandi dropped his hands
Biorn and Gunnar cast away,
Hope of dwelling in the day.

"Home again then travelled I;
The broad-boarded ship must lie,
Under Door-holm, as I went,
Still with weapon-play content,
Through the land; and there the thane
Called me to the iron rain,
Bade me make the spear-storm rise,
Torfi Vebrandson the wise.

"To such plight the Skald was brought,
Wounder of the walls of thought,
Howsoever many men
Stood, all armed, about us then,
That his hand that knew the oar,
Grip of sword might touch no more;
Yet to me the wound who gave
Did he give a horse to have.

Grettir sings of his deeds

"Thorbiorn Arnor's son, men said,
Of no great deed was afraid,
Folk spake of him far and wide;
He forbade me to abide
Longer on the lovely earth;
Yet his heart was little worth,
Not more safe alone was I,
Than when armed he drew a-nigh.

"From the sword's edge and the spears,
From my many waylayers,
While might was, and my good day,
Often did I snatch away;
Now a hag, whose life outworn
Wicked craft and ill hath borne,
Meet for death lives long enow,
Grettir's might to overthrow." [1]

"Now must we take good heed to ourselves," said Grettir, "for Thorbiorn Angle must be minded that this hap shall not go alone; and I will, Noise, that thou watch the ladders every day from this time forth, but pull them up in the evening, and see thou do it well and truly, even as though much lay thereon, but if thou bewrayest us, short will be thy road to ill."

So Noise promised great things concerning this. Now the weather grew harder, and a north-east wind came on with great cold: every night Grettir asked if the ladders were drawn up.

Then said Noise, "Yea, certainly! men are above all things to be looked for now. Can any man have such a mind to take thy life, that he will do so much as to slay himself therefor? for this gale is far other than fair; lo now, methinks thy so great bravery and hardihood has come utterly to an end, if thou must needs think that all things soever will be thy bane."

"Worse wilt thou bear thyself than either of us," said Gret-

[1] This song is obviously incomplete, and the second and third stanzas speak of matters that do not come into this story.

tir, "when the need is on us; but now go watch the ladders, whatsoever will thou hast thereto."

Grettir sings of his deeds

So every morning they drave him out, and ill he bore it.

But Grettir's hurt waxed in such wise that all the leg swelled up, and the thigh began to gather matter both above and below, and the lips of the wound were all turned out, so that Grettir's death was looked for.

Illugi sat over him night and day, and took heed to nought else, and by then it was the second week since Grettir hurt himself.

CHAPTER LXXXIII. HOW THORBIORN ANGLE GATHERED FORCE & SET SAIL FOR DRANGEY.

THORBIORN Angle sat this while at home at Woodwick, and was ill-content in that he might not win Grettir; but when a certain space had passed since the carline had put the sorcery into the root, she comes to talk with Thorbiorn, and asks if he were not minded to go see Grettir. He answers, that to nought was his mind so made up as that he would not go; "perchance thou wilt go meet him, foster-mother," says Thorbiorn.

"Nay, I shall not go meet him," says the carline; "but I have sent my greeting to him, and some hope I have that it has come home to him; and good it seems to me that thou go speedily to meet him, or else shalt thou never have such good hap as to overcome him."

Thorbiorn answered: "So many shameful journeys have I made thither, that there I go not ever again; moreover that alone is full enough to stay me, that such foul weather it is, that it is safe to go nowhither, whatso the need may be."

She answered: "Ill counselled thou art, not to see how to overcome herein. Now yet once again will I lay down a rede for this; go thou first and get thee strength of men, and ride to Hof to Halldor thy brother-in-law, and take counsel of him. But if I may rule in some way how Grettir's health goes,

Thorbiorn Angle gathers force

how shall it be said that it is past hope that I may also deal with the gale that has been veering about this while?"

Thorbiorn deemed it might well be that the carline saw further than he had thought she might, and straightway sent up into the country-side for men; but speedy answer there came that none of those who had given up their shares would do aught to ease his task, and they said that Thorbiorn should have to himself both the owning of the island and the onset on Grettir. But Tongue-Stein gave him two of his followers, and Hialti, his brother, sent him three men, and Eric of Goddales one, and from his own homestead he had six. So the twelve of them ride from Woodwick out to Hof. Halldor bade them abide there, and asked their errand; then Thorbiorn told it as clearly as might be. Halldor asked whose rede this might be, and Thorbiorn said that his foster-mother urged him much thereto.

"That will bear no good," said Halldor, "because she is cunning in sorcery, and such-like things are now forbidden."

"I may not look closely into all these matters beforehand," said Thorbiorn, "but in somewise or other shall this thing have an end if I may have my will. Now, how shall I go about it, so that I may come to the island?"

"Meseems," says Halldor, "that thou trustest in somewhat, though I wot not how good that may be. But now if thou wilt go forward with it, go thou out to Meadness in the Fleets to Biorn my friend; a good keel he has, so tell him of my word, that I would he should lend you the craft, and thence ye may sail out to Drangey. But the end of your journey I see not, if Grettir is sound and hale: yea, and be thou sure that if ye win him not in manly wise, he leaves enough of folk behind to take up the bloodsuit after him. And slay not Illugi if ye may do otherwise. But methinks I see that all is not according to Christ's law in these redes."

Then Halldor gave them six men withal for their journey; one was called Karr, another Thorleif, and a third Brand, but the rest are not named.

So they fared thence, eighteen in company, out to the

Fleets, and came to Meadness and gave Biorn Halldor's message; he said that it was but due for Halldor's sake, but that he owed nought to Thorbiorn; withal it seemed to him that they went on a mad journey, and he let them from it all he might. Thorbiorn Angle gathers force

They said they might not turn back, and so went down to the sea, and put forth the craft, and all its gear was in the boat-stand hard by; so they made them ready for sailing, and foul enow the weather seemed to all who stood on land. But they hoisted sail, and the craft shot swiftly far into the firth, but when they came out into the main part thereof into deep water, the wind abated in such wise that they deemed it blew none too hard.

So in the evening at dusk they came to Drangey.

CHAPTER LXXXIV. THE SLAYING OF GRETTIR ASMUNDSON.

NOW it is to be told, that Grettir was so sick, that he might not stand on his feet, but Illugi sat beside him, and Noise was to keep watch and ward; and many words he had against that, and said that they would still think that life was falling from them, though nought had happed to bring it about; so he went out from their abode right unwillingly, and when he came to the ladders he spake to himself and said that now he would not draw them up; withal he grew exceeding sleepy, and lay down and slept all day long, and right on till Thorbiorn came to the island.

So now they see that the ladders are not drawn up; then spake Thorbiorn, "Now are things changed from what the wont was, in that there are none afoot, and their ladder stands in its place withal; maybe more things will betide in this our journey than we had thought of in the beginning: but now let us hasten to the hut, and let no man lack courage; for, wot this well, that if these men are hale, each one of us must needs do his best."

Then they went up on to the island, and looked round about, and saw where a man lay a little space off the landing-

The slaying of Grettir

place, and snored hard and fast. Therewith Thorbiorn knew Noise, and went up to him and drave the hilt of his sword against the ear of him, and bade him, "Wake up, beast! certes in evil stead is he who trusts his life to thy faith and troth."

Noise looked up thereat and said, "Ah! now are they minded to go on according to their wont; do ye, mayhappen, think my freedom too great, though I lie out here in the cold?"

"Art thou witless," said Angle, "that thou seest not that thy foes are come upon thee, and will slay you all?"

Then Noise answered nought, but yelled out all he might, when he knew the men who they were.

"Do one thing or other," says Angle, "either hold thy peace forthwith, and tell us of your abode, or else be slain of us."

Thereat was Noise as silent as if he had been thrust under water; but Thorbiorn said, "Are they at their hut, those brothers? Why are they not afoot?"

"Scarce might that be," said Noise, "for Grettir is sick and come nigh to his death, and Illugi sits over him."

Then Angle asked how it was with their health, and what things had befallen. So Noise told him in what wise Grettir's hurt had come about.

Then Angle laughed and said, "Yea, sooth is the old saw, *Old friends are the last to sever;* and this withal, *Ill if a thrall is thine only friend*, whereso thou art, Noise; for shamefully hast thou bewrayed thy master, albeit he was nought good."

Then many laid evil things to his charge for his ill faith, and beat him till he was well-nigh past booting for, and let him lie there; but they went up to the hut and smote mightily on the door.

"Pied-belly[1] is knocking hard at the door, brother," says Illugi.

"Yea, yea, hard, and over hard," says Grettir; and therewithal the door brake asunder.

Then sprang Illugi to his weapons and guarded the door,

[1] "Pied-belly," the name of the tame ram told of before.

in such wise that there was no getting in for them. Long time they set on him there, and could bring nought against him save spear-thrusts, and still Illugi smote all the spearheads from the shafts. But when they saw that they might thus bring nought to pass, they leapt up on to the roof of the hut, and tore off the thatch; then Grettir got to his feet and caught up a spear, and thrust out betwixt the rafters; but before that stroke was Karr, a home-man of Halldor of Hof, and forthwithal it pierced him through. The slaying of Grettir

Then spoke Angle, and bade men fare warily and guard themselves well, "for we may prevail against them if we follow wary redes."

So they tore away the thatch from the ends of the ridge-beam, and bore on the beam till it brake asunder.

Now Grettir might not rise from his knee, but he caught up the short-sword, Karr's-loom, and even therewith down leapt those men in betwixt the walls, and a hard fray befell betwixt them. Grettir smote with the short-sword at Vikar, one of the followers of Hialti Thordson, and caught him on the left shoulder, even as he leapt in betwixt the walls, and cleft him athwart the shoulder down unto the right side, so that the man fell asunder, and the body so smitten atwain tumbled over on to Grettir, and for that cause he might not heave aloft the short-sword as speedily as he would, and therewith Thorbiorn Angle thrust him betwixt the shoulders, and great was that wound he gave.

Then cried Grettir, "*Bare is the back of the brotherless.*" And Illugi threw his shield over Grettir, and warded him in so stout a wise that all men praised his defence.

Then said Grettir to Angle, "Who then showed thee the way here to the island?"

Said Angle, "The Lord Christ showed it us."

"Nay," said Grettir, "but I guess that the accursed hag, thy foster-mother, showed it thee, for in her redes must thou needs have trusted."

"All shall be one to thee now," said Angle, "in whomsoever I have put my trust."

The slaying of Grettir

Then they set on them fiercely, and Illugi made defence for both in most manly wise; but Grettir was utterly unmeet for fight, both for his wounds' sake and for his sickness. So Angle bade bear down Illugi with shields, "For never have I met his like, amongst men of such age."

Now thus they did, besetting him with beams and weapons till he might ward himself no longer; and then they laid hands on him, and so held him fast. But he had given some wound or other to the more part of those who had been at the onset, and had slain outright three of Angle's fellows.

Thereafter they went up to Grettir, but he was fallen forward on to his face, and no defence there was of him, for that he was already come to death's door by reason of the hurt in his leg, for all the thigh was one sore, even up to the small guts; but there they gave him many a wound, yet little or nought he bled.

So when they thought he was dead, Angle laid hold of the short-sword, and said that he had carried it long enough; but Grettir's fingers yet kept fast hold of the grip thereof, nor could the short-sword be loosened; many went up and tried at it, but could get nothing done therewith; eight of them were about it before the end, but none the more might bring it to pass.

Then said Angle, "Why should we spare this wood-man here? lay his hand on the block."

So when that was done they smote off his hand at the wrist, and the fingers straightened, and were loosed from the handle. Then Angle took the short-sword in both hands and smote at Grettir's head, and a right great stroke that was, so that the short-sword might not abide it, and a shard was broken from the midst of the edge thereof; and when men saw that, they asked why he must needs spoil a fair thing in such wise.

But Angle answered, "More easy is it to know that weapon now if it should be asked for."

They said it needed not such a deed since the man was dead already.

"Ah! but yet more shall be done," said Angle, and hewed

therewith twice or thrice at Grettir's neck, or ever the head came off; and then he spake, The slaying of Grettir

"Now know I for sure that Grettir is dead."

In such wise Grettir lost his life, the bravest man of all who have dwelt in Iceland; he lacked but one winter of forty-five years whenas he was slain; but he was fourteen winters old when he slew Skeggi, his first man-slaying; and from thenceforth all things turned to his fame, till the time when he dealt with Glam, the Thrall; and in those days was he of twenty winters; but when he fell into outlawry, he was twenty-five years old; but in outlawry was he nigh nineteen winters, and full oft was he the while in great trials of men; and such as his life was, and his needs, he held well to his faith and troth, and most haps did he foresee, though he might do nought to meet them.

CHAPTER LXXXV. HOW THORBIORN ANGLE CLAIMED GRETTIR'S HEAD-MONEY.

"A GREAT champion have we laid to earth here," said Thorbiorn; "now shall we bring the head aland with us, for I will not lose the money which has been laid thereon; nor may they then feign that they know not if I have slain Grettir."

They bade him do his will, but had few words to say hereon, for to all the deed seemed a deed of little prowess.

Then Angle fell to speaking with Illugi,

"Great scathe it is of such a brave man as thou art, that thou hast fallen to such folly, as to betake thee to ill deeds with this outlaw here, and must needs lie slain and unatoned therefor."

Illugi answered, "Then first when the Althing is over this summer, wilt thou know who are outlaws; but neither thou nor the carline, thy foster-mother, will judge in this matter, because that your sorcery and craft of old days have slain Grettir, though thou didst, indeed, bear steel against him, as he lay at death's door, and wrought that so great coward's deed there, over and above thy sorcery."

Thorbiorn claims Grettir's head-money

Then said Angle, "In manly wise speakest thou, but not thus will it be; and I will show thee that I think great scathe in thy death, for thy life will I give thee if thou wilt swear an oath for us here, to avenge thyself on none of those who have been in this journey."

Illugi said, "That might I have deemed a thing to talk about, if Grettir had been suffered to defend himself, and ye had won him with manliness and hardihood; but now nowise is it to be thought, that I will do so much for the keeping of my life, as to become base, even as thou art: and here I tell thee, once for all, that no one of men shall be of less gain to thee than I, if I live; for long will it be or ever I forget how ye have prevailed against Grettir.—Yea, much rather do I choose to die."

Then Thorbiorn Angle held talk with his fellows, whether they should let Illugi live or not; they said that, whereas he had ruled the journey, so should he rule the deeds; so Angle said that he knew not how to have that man hanging over his head, who would neither give troth, nor promise aught.

But when Illugi knew that they were fully minded to slay him, he laughed, and spake thus,

"Yea, now have your counsels sped, even as my heart would."

So at the dawning of the day they brought him to the eastern end of the island, and there slaughtered him; but all men praised his great heart, and deemed him unlike to any of his age.

They laid both the brothers in cairn on the island there; and thereafter took Grettir's head, and bore it away with them, and whatso goods there were in weapons or clothes; but the good short-sword Angle would not put into the things to be shared, and he bare it himself long afterwards. Noise they took with them, and he bore himself as ill as might be.

At nightfall the gale abated, and they rowed aland in the morning. Angle took land at the handiest place, and sent the craft out to Biorn; but by then they were come hard by

Oyce-land, Noise began to bear himself so ill, that they were loth to fare any longer with him, so there they slew him, and long and loud he greeted or ever he was cut down. Thorbiorn claims Grettir's head-money

Thorbiorn Angle went home to Woodwick, and deemed he had done in manly wise in this journey; but Grettir's head they laid in salt in the out-bower at Woodwick, which was called therefrom Grettir's-bower; and there it lay the winter long. But Angle was exceeding ill thought of for this work of his, as soon as folk knew that Grettir had been overcome by sorcery.

Thorbiorn Angle sat quiet till past Yule; then he rode to meet Thorir of Garth, and told him of these slayings; and this withal, that he deemed that money his due which had been put on Grettir's head. Thorir said that he might not hide that he had brought about Grettir's outlawry,

"Yea, and oft have I dealt hardly with him, yet so much for the taking of his life I would not have done, as to make me a misdoer, a man of evil craft, even as thou hast done; and the less shall I lay down that money for thee, in that I deem thee surely to be a man of forfeit life because of thy sorcery and wizard-craft."

Thorbiorn Angle answers, "Meseems thou art urged hereto more by closefistedness and a poor mind, than by any heed of how Grettir was won."

Thorir said that a short way they might make of it, in that they should abide the Althing, and take whatso the Lawman might deem most rightful: and in such wise they parted that there was no little ill-will betwixt Thorir and Thorbiorn Angle.

CHAPTER LXXXVI. HOW THORBIORN ANGLE BROUGHT GRETTIR'S HEAD TO BIARG.

THE kin of Grettir and Illugi were exceeding ill-content when they heard of these slayings, and they so looked on matters as deeming that Angle had wrought a shameful deed in slaying a man at death's door; and that, besides that, he had become guilty of sorcery. They sought

Thorbiorn brings Grettir's head

the counsel of the wisest men, and everywhere was Angle's work ill spoken of. As for him, he rode to Midfirth, when it lacked four weeks of summer; and when his ways were heard of, Asdis gathered men to her, and there came many of her friends: Gamli and Glum, her brothers-in-law, and their sons, Skeggi, who was called the Short-handed, and Uspak who is aforesaid. Asdis was so well befriended, that all the Midfirthers came to aid her; yea, even those who were aforetime foes to Grettir; and the first man there was Thorod Drapa-Stump, and the more part of the Ramfirthers.

Now Angle came to Biarg with twenty men, and had Grettir's head with him; but not all those had come yet who had promised aid to Asdis; so Angle and his folk went into the chamber with the head, and set it down on the floor; the goodwife was there in the chamber, and many men with her; nor did it come to greetings on either side; but Angle sang this stave:

"A greedy head I bring with me
Up from the borders of the sea;
Now may the needle-pliers weep,
The red-haired outlaw lies asleep;
Gold-bearer, cast adown thine eyes,
And see how on the pavement lies
The peace-destroying head brought low,
That but for salt had gone ere now."

The goodwife sat silent when he gave forth the stave, and thereafter she sang:

"O thou poor wretch, as sheep that flee
To treacherous ice when wolves they see,
So in the waves would ye have drowned
Your shame and fear, had ye but found
That steel-god hale upon the isle:
Now heavy shame, woe worth the while!
Hangs over the north country-side,
Nor I my loathing care to hide."

Then many said that it was nought wonderful, though she had brave sons, so brave as she herself was, amid such grief of heart as was brought on her. Thorbiorn brings Grettir's head

Uspak was without, and held talk with such of Angle's folk as had not gone in, and asked concerning the slayings; and all men praised Illugi's defence; and they told withal how fast Grettir had held the short-sword after he was dead, and marvellous that seemed to men.

Amidst these things were seen many men riding from the west, and thither were coming many friends of the goodwife, with Gamli and Skeggi west from Meals.

Now Angle had been minded to take out execution after Illugi, for he and his men claimed all his goods; but when that crowd of men came up, Angle saw that he might do nought therein, but Gamli and Uspak were of the eagerest, and were fain to set on Angle; but those who were wisest bade them take the rede of Thorvald their kinsman, and the other chief men, and said that worse would be deemed of Angle's case the more wise men sat in judgment over it; then such truce there was that Angle rode away, having Grettir's head with him, because he was minded to bear it to the Althing.

So he rode home, and thought matters looked heavy enough, because well-nigh all the chief men of the land were either akin to Grettir and Illugi, or tied to them and theirs by marriage: that summer, moreover, Skeggi the Short-handed took to wife the daughter of Thorod Drapa-Stump, and therewithal Thorod joined Grettir's kin in these matters.

CHAP. LXXXVII. AFFAIRS AT THE ALTHING.

NOW men rode to the Althing, and Angle's helpers were fewer than he had looked for, because that his case was spoken ill of far and wide.

Then asked Halldor whether they were to carry Grettir's head with them to the Althing.

Angle said that he would bear it with him.

"Ill-counselled is that," said Halldor; "for many enough

Affairs at the Althing

will thy foes be, though thou doest nought to jog the memories of folk, or wake up their grief."

By then were they come on their way, and were minded to ride south over the Sand; so Angle let take the head, and bury it in a hillock of sand, which is called Grettir's Hillock.

Thronged was the Althing, and Angle put forth his case, and praised his own deeds mightily, in that he had slain the greatest outlaw in all the land, and claimed the money as his, which had been put on Grettir's head. But Thorir had the same answer for him as was told afore.

Then was the Lawman prayed for a decision, and he said that he would fain hear if any charges came against this, whereby Angle should forfeit his blood-money, or else he said he must have whatsoever had been put on Grettir's head.

Then Thorvald Asgeirson called on Skeggi the Short-handed to put forth his case, and he summoned Thorbiorn Angle with a first summons for the witchcraft and sorcery, whereby Grettir must have got his bane, and then with another summons withal, for that they had borne weapons against a half-dead man, and hereon he claimed an award of outlawry.

Now folk drew much together on this side and on that, but few there were that gave aid to Thorbiorn; and things turned out otherwise than he had looked for, because Thorvald, and Isleif, his son-in-law, deemed it a deed worthy of death to bring men to their end by evil sorcery; but through the words of wise men these cases had such end, that Thorbiorn should sail away that same summer, and never come back to Iceland while any such were alive, as had the blood-suit for Grettir and Illugi.

And then, moreover, was it made law that all workers of olden craft should be made outlaws.

So when Angle saw what his lot would be, he gat him gone from the Thing, because it might well hap that Grettir's kin would set on him; nor did he get aught of the fee that was put on Grettir's head, for that Stein the Lawman would not

that it should be paid for a deed of shame. None of those men of Thorbiorn's company who had fallen in Drangey were atoned, for they were to be made equal to the slaying of Illugi, but their kin were exceeding ill content therewith. Affairs at the Althing

So men rode home from the Thing, and all blood-suits that men had against Grettir fell away.

Skeggi, the son of Gamli, who was son-in-law of Thorod Drapa-Stump, and sister's son of Grettir, went north to Skagafirth at the instance of Thorvald Asgeirson, and Isleif his son-in-law, who was afterwards Bishop of Skalholt, and by the consent of all the people got to him a keel, and went to Drangey to seek the corpses of the brothers, Grettir and Illugi; and he brought them back to Reeks, in Reek-strand, and buried them there at the church; and it is for a token that Grettir lies there, that in the days of the Sturlungs, when the church of Reeks was moved, Grettir's bones were dug up, nor were they deemed so wondrous great, great enough though they were. The bones of Illugi were buried afterwards north of the church, but Grettir's head at home in the church at Biarg.

Goodwife Asdis abode at home at Biarg, and so well beloved she was, that no trouble was ever brought against her, no, not even while Grettir was in outlawry.

Skeggi the Short-handed took the household at Biarg after Asdis, and a mighty man he was; his son was Gamli, the father of Skeggi of Scarf-stead, and Asdis the mother of Odd the Monk. Many men are come from him.

CHAP. LXXXVIII. THORBIORN ANGLE GOES TO NORWAY, & THENCE TO MICKLEGARTH.

THORBIORN Angle took ship at Goose-ere, with whatso of his goods he might take with him; but Hialti his brother took to him his lands, and Angle gave him Drangey withal. Hialti became a great chief in after-times, but he has nought more to do with this tale.

So Angle fared out to Norway; he yet made much of himself, for he deemed he had wrought a great deed in the slaying

Thorbiorn goes to Norway

of Grettir, and so thought many others, who knew not how all had come to pass, for many knew how renowned a man Grettir had been; withal Angle told just so much of their dealings together as might do him honour, and let such of the tale lie quiet as was of lesser glory.

Now this tale came in the autumn-tide east to Tunsberg, and when Thorstein Dromund heard of the slayings he grew all silent, because it was told him that Angle was a mighty man and a hardy; and he called to mind the words which he had spoken when he and Grettir talked together, long time agone, concerning the fashion of their arms.

So Thorstein put out spies on Angle's goings; they were both in Norway through the winter, but Thorbiorn was in the north-country, and Thorstein in Tunsberg, nor had either seen other; yet was Angle ware that Grettir had a brother in Norway, and thought it hard to keep guard of himself in an unknown land, wherefore he sought counsel as to where he should betake himself. Now in those days many Northmen went out to Micklegarth, and took war-pay there; so Thorbiorn deemed it would be good to go thither and get to him thereby both fee and fame, nor to abide in the Northlands because of the kin of Grettir. So he made ready to go from Norway, and get him gone from out the land, and made no stay till he came to Micklegarth, and there took war-hire.

CHAPTER LXXXIX. HOW THE SHORT-SWORD WAS THE EASIER KNOWN WHEN SOUGHT FOR BY REASON OF THE NOTCH IN THE BLADE.

THORSTEIN Dromund was a mighty man, and of the greatest account; and now he heard that Thorbiorn Angle had got him gone from the land out to Micklegarth; speedy were his doings thereon, he gave over his lands into his kinsmen's hands, and betook himself to journeying and to search for Angle; and ever he followed after whereas Angle had gone afore, nor was Angle ware of his goings.

So Thorstein Dromund came out to Micklegarth a little

after Angle, and was fain above all things to slay him, but neither knew the other. Now had they will to be taken into the company of the Varangians, and the matter went well as soon as the Varangians knew that they were Northmen; and in those days was Michael Katalak king over Micklegarth. How the sword was known

Thorstein Dromund watched for Angle, if in some wise he might know him, but won not the game because of the many people there; and ever would he lie awake, ill-content with his lot, and thinking how great was his loss.

Now hereupon it befell that the Varangians were to go on certain warfare, and free the land from harrying; and their manner and law it was before they went from home to hold a weapon-show, and so it was now done; and when the weapon-show was established, then were all Varangians to come there, and those withal who were minded to fall into their company, and they were to show forth their weapons.

Thither came both Thorstein and Angle; but Thorbiorn Angle showed forth his weapons first; and he had the short-sword, Grettir's-loom; but when he showed it many praised it and said that it was an exceeding good weapon, but that it was a great blemish, that notch in the edge thereof; and asked him withal what had brought that to pass.

Angle said it was a thing worthy to be told of, "For this is the next thing to be said," says he, "that out in Iceland I slew that champion who was called Grettir the Strong, and who was the greatest warrior and the stoutest-hearted of all men of that land, for him could no man vanquish till I came forth for that end; and whereas I had the good hap to win him, I took his life; though indeed he had my strength many times over; then I drave this short-sword into his head, and thereby was a shard broken from out its edge."

So those who stood nigh said, that he must have been hard of head then, and each showed the short-sword to the other; but hereby Thorstein deemed he knew now who this man was, and he prayed withal to see the short-sword even as the others; then Angle gave it up with good will, for all

How the sword was known

were praising his bravery and that daring onset, and even in such wise did he think this one would do; and in no wise did he misdoubt him that Thorstein was there, or that the man was akin to Grettir.

Then Dromund took the short-sword, and raised it aloft, and hewed at Angle and smote him on the head, and so great was the stroke that it stayed but at the jaw-teeth, and Thorbiorn Angle fell to earth dead and dishonoured.

Thereat all men became hushed; but the Chancellor of the town seized Thorstein straightway, and asked for what cause he did such an ill-deed there at the hallowed Thing.

Thorstein said that he was the brother of Grettir the Strong, and that withal he had never been able to bring vengeance to pass till then; so thereupon many put in their word, and said that the strong man must needs have been of great might and nobleness, in that Thorstein had fared so far forth into the world to avenge him: the rulers of the city deemed that like enough; but whereas there was none there to bear witness in aught to Thorstein's word, that law of theirs prevailed, that whosoever slew a man should lose nought but his life.

So then speedy doom and hard enow did Thorstein get; for in a dark chamber of a dungeon should he be cast and there abide his death, if none redeemed him therefrom with money. But when Thorstein came into the dungeon, there was a man there already, who had come to death's door from misery; and both foul and cold was that abode; Thorstein spake to that man and said,

"How deemest thou of thy life?"

He answered, "As of a right evil life, for of nought can I be holpen, nor have I kinsmen to redeem me."

Thorstein said, "Nought is of less avail in such matters than lack of good rede; let us be merry then, and do somewhat that will be glee and game to us."

The man said that he might have no glee of aught.

"Nay, then, but let us try it," said Thorstein. And therewithal he fell to singing; and he was a man of such

goodly voice that scarcely might his like be found therefor, nor did he now spare himself.

How the sword was known

Now the highway was but a little way from the dungeon, and Thorstein sang so loud and clear that the walls resounded therewith, and great game this seemed to him who had been half-dead erst; and in such wise did Thorstein keep it going till the evening.

CHAP. XC. HOW THE LADY SPES REDEEMED THORSTEIN FROM THE DUNGEON.

THERE was a great lady of a castle in that town called Spes, exceeding rich and of great kin; Sigurd was the name of her husband, a rich man too, but of lesser kin than she was, and for money had she been wedded to him; no great love there was betwixt them, for she thought she had been wedded far beneath her; high-minded she was and a very stirring woman.

Now so it befell, that, as Thorstein made him merry that night, Spes walked in the street hard by the dungeon, and heard thence so fair a voice, that she said she had never yet heard its like. She went with many folk, and so now she bade them go learn who had that noble voice. So they called out and asked who lay there in such evil plight; and Thorstein named himself.

Then said Spes, "Art thou a man as much skilled in other matters as in singing?"

He said there was but little to show for that.

"What ill-deed hast thou done," said she, "that thou must needs be tormented here to the death?"

He said that he had slain a man, and avenged his brother thereby, "But I could not show that by witnesses," said Thorstein, "and therefore have I been cast into ward here, unless some man should redeem me, nor do I hope therefor, for no man have I here akin to me."

"Great loss of thee if thou art slain! and that brother of thine whom thou didst avenge, was he a man so famed, then?"

How the Lady Spes redeemed Thorstein

He said that he was more mighty than he by the half; and so she asked what token there was thereof. Then sang Thorstein this stave:

"Field of rings, eight men, who raise
Din of sword in clattering ways,
Strove the good short-sword in vain
From the strong dead hand to gain;
So they ever strained and strove,
Till at last it did behove
The feared quickener of the fight
From the glorious man to smite."

"Great prowess such a thing shows of the man," said those who understood the stave; and when she knew thereof, she spake thus,

"Wilt thou take thy life from me, if such a choice is given thee?"

"That will I," said Thorstein, "if this fellow of mine, who sits hereby, is redeemed along with me; or else will we both abide here together."

She answers, "More of a prize do I deem thee than him."

"Howsoever that may be," said Thorstein, "we shall go away in company both of us together, or else shall neither go."

Then she went there, whereas were the Varangians, and prayed for freedom for Thorstein, and offered money to that end; and to this were they right willing; and so she brought about by her mighty friendships and her wealth that they were both set free. But as soon as Thorstein came out of the dungeon he went to see goodwife Spes, and she took him to her and kept him privily; but whiles was he with the Varangians in warfare, and in all onsets showed himself the stoutest of hearts.

CHAPTER XCI. OF THE DOINGS OF THORSTEIN AND THE LADY SPES.

Thorstein and the Lady Spes

IN those days was Harald Sigurdson at Micklegarth, and Thorstein fell into friendship with him. Of much account was Thorstein held, for Spes let him lack no money; and greatly they turned their hearts one to the other, Thorstein and Spes; and many folk beside her deemed great things of his prowess.

Now her money was much squandered, because she ever gave herself to the getting of great friends; and her husband deemed that he could see that she was much changed, both in temper and many other of her ways, but most of all in the spending of money; both gold and good things he missed, which were gone from her keeping.

So on a time Sigurd her husband talks with her, and says that she has taken to strange ways. "Thou givest no heed to our goods," says he, "but squanderest them in many wise; and, moreover, it is even as if I saw thee ever in a dream, nor ever wilt thou be there whereas I am; and I know for sure that something must bring this about."

She answered, "I told thee, and my kinsfolk told thee, whenas we came together, that I would have my full will and freedom over all such things as it was beseeming for me to bestow, and for that cause I spare not thy goods. Hast thou perchance aught to say to me concerning other matters which may be to my shame?"

He answers, "Somewhat do I misdoubt me that thou holdest some man or other whom thou deemest better than I be."

"I wot not," says she, "what ground there may be thereto; but meseems thou mayest speak with little truth; and yet, none-the-less, we two alone shall not speak on this matter if thou layest this slander on me."

So he let the talk drop for that time; she and Thorstein went on in the same way, nor were they wary of the words of evil folk, for she ever trusted in her many and wise friends. Oft they sat talking together and making merry; and on an

Thorstein and the Lady Spes

evening as they sat in a certain loft, wherein were goodly things of hers, she bade Thorstein sing somewhat, for she thought the goodman was sitting at the drink, as his wont was, so she bolted the door. But, when he had sung a certain while, the door was driven at, and one called from outside to open; and there was come the husband with many of his folk.

The goodwife had unlocked a great chest to show Thorstein her dainty things; so when she knew who was there, she would not unlock the door, but speaks to Thorstein, "Quick is my rede, jump into the chest and keep silent."

So he did, and she shot the bolt of the chest and sat thereon herself; and even therewith in came the husband into the loft, for he and his had broken open the door thereof.

Then said the lady, "Why do ye fare with all this uproar? are your foes after you then?"

The goodman answered, "Now it is well that thou thyself givest proof of thyself what thou art; where is the man who trolled out that song so well e'en now? I wot thou deemest him of far fairer voice than I be."

She said: "Not altogether a fool is he who can be silent; but so it fares not with thee: thou deemest thyself cunning, and art minded to bind thy lie on my back. Well, then, let proof be made thereof! If there be truth in thy words, take the man; he will scarce have leapt out through the walls or the roof."

So he searched through the place, and found him not, and she said, "Why dost thou not take him then, since thou deemest the thing so sure?"

He was silent, nor knew in sooth amid what wiles he was come; then he asked his fellows if they had not heard him even as he had. But whereas they saw that the mistress misliked the matter, their witness came to nought, for they said that oft folk heard not things as they were in very sooth. So the husband went out, and deemed he knew that sooth well enough, though they had not found the man; and now for a long time he left spying on his wife and her ways.

Another time, long after, Thorstein and Spes sat in a certain cloth-bower, and therein were clothes, both cut and uncut, which the wedded folk owned; there she showed to Thorstein many kinds of cloth, and they unfolded them; but when they were least ware of it the husband came on them with many men, and brake into the loft; but while they were about that she heaped up clothes over Thorstein, and leaned against the clothes-stack when they came into the chamber. Thorstein and the Lady Spes

"Wilt thou still deny," said the goodman, "that there was a man with thee, when such men there are as saw you both?"

She bade them not to go on so madly. "This time ye will not fail, belike; but let me be at peace, and worry me not."

So they searched through the place and found nought, and at last gave it up.

Then the goodwife answered and said, "It is ever good to give better proof than the guesses of certain folk; nor was it to be looked for that ye should find that which was not. Wilt thou now confess thy folly, husband, and free me from this slander?"

He said, "The less will I free thee from it in that I trow thou art in very sooth guilty of that which I have laid to thy charge; and thou wilt have to put forth all thy might in this case, if thou art to get this thrust from thee."

She said that that was in no wise against her mind, and therewithal they parted.

Thereafter was Thorstein ever with the Varangians, and men say that he sought counsel of Harald Sigurdson, and their mind it is that Thorstein and Spes would not have taken to those redes but for the trust they had in him and his wisdom.

Now as time wore on, goodman Sigurd gave out that he would fare from home on certain errands of his own. The goodwife nowise let him herein; and when he was gone, Thorstein came to Spes, and the twain were ever together. Now such was the fashion of her castle that it was built forth over

Thorstein and the Lady Spes

the sea, and there were certain chambers therein whereunder the sea flowed; in such a chamber Thorstein and Spes ever sat; and a little trap-door there was in the floor of it, whereof none knew but those twain, and it might be opened if there were hasty need thereof.

Now it is to be told of the husband that he went nowhither, save into hiding, that he might spy the ways of the housewife; so it befell that, one night as they sat alone in the sea-loft and were glad together, the husband came on them unawares with a crowd of folk, for he had brought certain men to a window of the chamber, and bade them see if things were not even according to his word: and all said that he spake but the sooth, and that so belike he had done aforetime.

So they ran into the loft, but when Spes heard the crash, she said to Thorstein,

"Needs must thou go down hereby, whatsoever be the cost, but give me some token if thou comest safe from the place."

He said yea thereto, and plunged down through the floor, and the housewife spurned her foot at the lid, and it fell back again into its place, and no new work was to be seen on the floor.

Now the husband and his men came into the loft, and went about searching, and found nought, as was likely; the loft was empty, so that there was nought therein save the floor and the cross-benches, and there sat the goodwife, and played with the gold on her fingers; she heeded them little, and made as if there was nought to do.

All this the goodman thought the strangest of all, and asked his folk if they had not seen the man, and they said that they had in good sooth seen him.

Then said the goodwife, "Hereto shall things come as is said: *Thrice of yore have all things happed*, and in likewise hast thou fared, Sigurd," says she, "for three times hadst thou undone my peace, meseems, and are ye any wiser than in the beginning?"

"This time I was not alone in my tale," said the goodman; "and now to make an end, shalt thou go through the freeing by law, for in nowise will I have this shame unbooted."

"Meseems," says the goodwife, "thou biddest me what I would bid of thee, for good above all things I deem it to free myself from this slander, which has spread so wide and high, that it would be great dishonour if I thrust it not from off me." Thorstein and the Lady Spes

"In likewise," said the goodman, "shalt thou prove that thou hast not given away or taken to thyself my goods."

She answers, "At that time when I free myself shall I in one wise thrust off from me all charges that thou hast to bring against me; but take thou heed whereto all shall come; I will at once free myself from all words that have been spoken here on this charge that thou now makest."

The goodman was well content therewith, and got him gone with his men.

Now it is to be told of Thorstein that he swam forth from under the chamber, and went aland where he would, and took a burning log, and held it up in such wise that it might be seen from the goodwife's castle, and she was abroad for long that evening, and right into the night, for that she would fain know if Thorstein had come aland; and so when she saw the fire, she deemed that she knew that Thorstein had taken land, for even such a token had they agreed on betwixt them.

The next morning Spes bade her husband speak of their matters to the bishop, and thereto was he fully ready. Now they come before the bishop, and the goodman put forward all the aforesaid charges against her.

The bishop asked if she had been known for such an one aforetime, but none said that they had heard thereof. Then he asked with what likelihood he brought those things against her. So the goodman brought forward men who had seen her sit in a locked room with a man beside her, and they twain alone: and therewith the goodman said that he misdoubted him of that man beguiling her.

The bishop said that she might well free herself lawfully from this charge if so she would. She said that it liked her well so to do, "and good hope I have," said Spes, "that I shall have great plenty of women to purge me by oath in this case."

Thorstein and the Lady Spes

Now was an oath set forward in words for her, and a day settled whereon the case should come about; and thereafter she went home, and was glad at heart, and Thorstein and Spes met, and settled fully what they should do.

CHAP. XCII. OF THE OATH THAT SPES MADE BEFORE THE BISHOP.

NOW that day passed, and time wore on to the day when Spes should make oath, and she bade thereto all her friends and kin, and arrayed herself in the best attire she had, and many noble ladies went with her.

Wet was the weather about that time, and the ways were miry, and a certain slough there was to go over or ever they might come to the church; and whenas Spes and her company came forth anigh this slough, a great crowd was there before them, and a multitude of poor folk who prayed them of alms, for this was in the common highway, and all who knew her deemed it was their part to welcome her, and prayed for good things for her as for one who had oft holpen them well.

A certain staff-propped carle there was amidst those poor folk, great of growth and long-bearded. Now the women made stay at the slough, because that the great people deemed the passage across over miry, and therewith when that staff-carle saw the goodwife, that she was better arrayed than the other women, he spake to her on this wise,

"Good mistress," said he, "be so lowly as to suffer me to bear thee over this slough, for it is the bounden duty of us staff-carles to serve thee all we may."

"What then," says she, "wilt thou bear me well, when thou mayst not bear thyself?"

"Yet would it show forth thy lowliness," says he, "nor may I offer better than I have withal; and in all things wilt thou fare the better, if thou hast no pride against poor folk."

"Wot thou well, then," says she, "that if thou bearest me not well it shall be for a beating to thee, or some other shame greater yet."

"Well, I would fain risk it," said he; and therewithal he

got on to his feet and stood in the slough. She made as if she were sore afeard of his carrying her, yet nathless she went on, borne on his back; and he staggered along exceeding slowly, going on two crutches, and when he got midmost of the slough he began to reel from side to side. She bade him gather up his strength. The oath that Spes made

"Never shalt thou have made a worse journey than this if thou castest me down here."

Then the poor wretch staggers on, and gathers up all his courage and strength, and gets close to the dry land, but stumbles withal, and falls head-foremost in such wise, that he cast her on to the bank, but fell into the ditch up to his armpits, and therewithal as he lay there caught at the goodwife, and gat no firm hold of her clothes, but set his miry hand on her knee right up to the bare thigh.

She sprang up and cursed him, and said that ever would evil come from wretched gangrel churles: "and thy full due it were to be beaten, if I thought it not a shame, because of thy misery."

Then said he, "Meted in unlike ways is man's bliss; methought I had done well to thee, and I looked for an alms at thy hands, and lo, in place thereof, I get but threats and ill-usage and no good again withal;" and he made as if he were exceeding angry.

Many deemed that he looked right poor and wretched, but she said that he was the wiliest of old churles; but whereas many prayed for him, she took her purse to her, and therein was many a penny of gold; then she shook down the money and said,

"Take thou this, carle; nowise good were it, if thou hadst not full pay for the hard words thou hadst of me; now have I parted with thee, even according to thy worth."

Then he picked up the gold, and thanked her for her good deed. Spes went to the church, and a great crowd was there before her. Sigurd pushed the case forward eagerly, and bade her free herself from those charges he had brought against her.

The oath that Spes made

She said, "I heed not thy charges; what man dost thou say thou hast seen in my chamber with me? Lo now oft it befalls that some worthy man will be with me, and that do I deem void of any shame; but hereby will I swear that to no man have I given gold, and of no man have I had fleshly defilement save of my husband, and that wretched staff-carle who laid his miry hand on my thigh when I was borne over the slough this same day."

Now many deemed that this was a full oath, and that no shame it was to her, though the carle had laid hand on her unwittingly; but she said that all things must be told even as they were.

Thereafter she swore the oath in such form as is said afore, and many said thereon that she showed the old saw to be true, *Swear loud and say little*. But for her, she said that wise men would think that this was not done by guile.

Then her kin fell to saying that great shame and grief it was for high-born women to have such lying charges brought against them bootless, whereas it was a crime worthy of death if it were openly known of any woman that she had done whoredoms against her husband. Therewithal Spes prayed the bishop to make out a divorce betwixt her and her husband Sigurd, because she said she might nowise bear his slanderous lying charges. Her kinsfolk pushed the matter forward for her, and so brought it about by their urgency that they were divorced, and Sigurd got little of the goods, and was driven away from the land withal, for here matters went as is oft shown that they will, and *the lower must lowt;* nor could he bring aught about to avail him, though he had but said the very sooth.

Now Spes took to her all their money, and was deemed the greatest of stirring women; but when folk looked into her oath, it seemed to them that there was some guile in it, and were of a mind that wise men must have taught her that way of swearing; and men dug out this withal, that the staff-carle who had carried her was even Thorstein Dromund. Yet for all that Sigurd got no righting of the matter.

CHAPTER XCIII. THORSTEIN AND SPES COME OUT TO NORWAY.

Thorstein and Spes come to Norway

THORSTEIN Dromund was with the Varangians while the talk ran highest about these matters; so famed did he become that it was deemed that scarce had any man of the like prowess come thither; the greatest honours he gat from Harald Sigurdson, for he was of his kin; and after his counsels did Thorstein do, as men are minded to think.

But a little after Sigurd was driven from the land, Thorstein fell to wooing Spes to wife, and she took it meetly, but went to her kinsmen for rede; then they held meetings thereon, and were of one accord that she herself must rule the matter; then was the bargain struck, and good was their wedded life, and they were rich in money, and all men deemed Thorstein to be a man of exceeding good luck, since he had delivered himself from all his troubles.

The twain were together for two winters in Micklegarth, and then Thorstein said to his goodwife that he would fain go back to see his possessions in Norway. She said he should have his will, so they sold the lands they had there, and gat them great wealth of chattels, and then betook them from that land, with a fair company, and went all the way till they came to Norway. Thorstein's kin welcomed them both right heartily, and soon saw that Spes was bountiful and high-minded, and she speedily became exceeding well befriended. Some children they had between them, and they abode on their lands, and were well content with their life.

In those days was Magnus the Good king over Norway. Thorstein soon went to meet him, and had good welcome of him, for he had grown famous for the avenging of Grettir the Strong (for men scarce know of its happening that any other Icelander, save Grettir Asmundson, was avenged in Micklegarth); and folk say that Thorstein became a man of King Magnus, and for nine winters after he had come to Norway he abode in peace, and folk of the greatest honour were they deemed, he and his wife.

Thorstein and Spes come to Norway

Then came home from Micklegarth King Harald Sigurdson, and King Magnus gave him half Norway, and they were both kings therein for a while; but after the death of King Magnus many of those who had been his friends were ill-content, for all men loved him; but folk might not abide the temper of King Harald, for that he was hard and was wont to punish men heavily.

But Thorstein Dromund was fallen into eld, though he was still the halest of men; and now was the slaying of Grettir Asmundson sixteen winters agone.

CHAPTER XCIV. THORSTEIN DROMUND AND SPES LEAVE NORWAY AGAIN.

AT that time many urged Thorstein to go meet King Harald, and become his man; but he took not kindly to it.

Then Spes spake: "I will, Thorstein," says she, "that thou go not to meet Harald the King, for to another king have we much more to pay, and need there is that we turn our minds to that; for now we both grow old and our youth is long departed, and far more have we followed after worldly devices, than the teaching of Christ, or the ways of justice and uprightness; now wot I well that this debt can be paid for us neither by our kindred or our goods, and I will that we ourselves should pay it: now will I therefore that we change our way of life and fare away from this land and unto the abode of the Pope, because I well believe that so only may my case be made easy to me."

Thorstein said, "As well known to me as to thee are the things thou talkest of; and it is meet that thou have thy will herein, since thou didst ever give me my will, in a matter of far less hope; and in all things will we do as thou biddest."

This took men utterly unawares; Thorstein was by then sixty-seven years of age, yet hale in all wise.

So now he bid to him all his kindred and folk allied to him, and laid before them the things he had determined on.

Wise men gave good words thereto, though they deemed of their departing as of the greatest loss. Thorstein and Spes leave Norway

But Thorstein said that there was nought sure about his coming back: "Now do I give thanks to all of you," says he, "for the heed ye paid to my goods when I was last away from the land; now I will offer you, and pray you to take to you my children's havings, and my children, and bring them up according to the manliness that is in you; for I am fallen so far into eld that there is little to say as to whether I may return or not, though I may live; but ye shall in such wise look after all that I leave behind me here, even as if I should never come back to Norway."

Then men answered, that good redes would be plenteous if the housewife should abide behind to look after his affairs; but she said,

"For that cause did I come hither from the outlands, and from Micklegarth, with Thorstein, leaving behind both kin and goods, for that I was fain that one fate might be over us both; now have I thought it good to be here; but I have no will to abide long in Norway or the Northlands if he goes away; ever has there been great love betwixt us withal, and nought has happed to divide us; now therefore will we depart together, for to both of us is known the truth about many things that befell since we first met."

So, when they had settled their affairs in this wise, Thorstein bade chosen folk divide his goods into halves; and his kin took the half which his children were to own, and they were brought up by their father's kin, and were in aftertimes the mightiest of men, and great kin in the Wick has come from them. But Thorstein and Spes divided their share of the goods, and some they gave to churches for their souls' health, and some they took with them. Then they betook themselves Romeward, and many folk prayed well for them.

Thorstein and Spes fare to Rome

CHAPTER XCV. HOW THORSTEIN DROMUND AND SPES FARED TO ROME AND DIED THERE.

NOW they went their ways till they came to Rome-town; and so when they came before him, who was appointed to hear the shrifts of men, they told him well and truly all things even as they had happed, and with what cunning and craft they had joined together in wedlock; therewithal they gave themselves up with great humility to such penance for the amending of their lives as he should lay on them; but because that they themselves had turned their minds to the atoning of their faults, without any urging or anger from the rulers of the church, they were eased of all fines as much as might be, but were bidden gently that they should now and henceforth concern themselves reasonably for their souls' health, and from this time forward live in chastity, since they had gotten them release from all their guilt; and herewith they were deemed to have fared well and wisely.

Then said Spes, "Now, meseems, our matters have gone well and are come to an end, and no unlucky life have we had together; yet maybe fools will do after the pattern of our former life; now therefore let us make such an end to all, that good men also may follow after us and do the like: so let us go bargain with those who are deft in stone-craft; that they make for each of us a cell of stone, that we may thereby atone for what we have done against God."

So Thorstein laid down money for the making of a stone cell for each of them, and for such-like other things as they might need, and might not be without for the keeping of their lives; and then, when the stone work was done, and the time was meet therefor and all things were ready, they departed their worldly fellowship of their own free will, that they might the more enjoy a holy fellowship in another world. And there they abode both in their stone cells, and lived as long as God would have it, and so ended their lives. And most men say that Thorstein Dromund and Spes his wife may be deemed to be folk of the greatest good luck, all things being accounted

of; but neither his children or any of his issue have come to Iceland for a tale to be made of them. Thorstein and Spes fare to Rome

Now Sturla the Lawman says so much as that he deems no outlawed man ever to have been so mighty as Grettir the Strong; and thereto he puts forth three reasons—

And first in that he was the wisest of them all; for the longest in outlawry he was of any man, and was never won whiles he was hale.

And again, in that he was the strongest in all the land among men of a like age; and more fitted to lay ghosts and do away with hauntings than any other.

And thirdly, in that he was avenged out in Micklegarth, even as no other man of Iceland has been; and this withal, that Thorstein Dromund, who avenged him, was so lucky a man in his last days.

So here ends the story of Grettir Asmundson, our fellow-countryman. Thank have they who listened thereto; but thank little enow to him who scribbled out the tale.

GOOD PEOPLE, HERE THE WORK HATH END:
MAY ALL FOLK TO THE GOOD GOD WEND!

NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

Page 23. The genealogy of Gamli of Meals, as here recorded, seems to be peculiar to Grettir's saga. Yet its statements are inconsistent in the matter, for it gives this twofold genealogy of the man. See Ed. Kaupmannahöfn: 1853.

Page 23. Ranveig was the wife of Gamli, the son of *Thorald*, the son of the *Vendlander*.

Page 74. And (Thorir of the Pass) sold the land at Meals to *Thorhalli*, son of Gamli the *Widelander*. His son was Gamli, who had to wife Ranveig, the daughter of Asmund Greyhaired.

According to "Landnáma," this Gamli of Meals, Asmund's son-in-law, was son of Thord, and great-great-grandson of Thorhrolf or Thorolf Fasthaldi (Fastholding), who settled lands on the north coast of Icefirthdeep (Isafjarðardjúp), and farmed at Snowfells (Snæfjöll). We have given Thorhall in our translation in both places as the man's name. Perhaps Thoraldr is nothing but a corruption of Thorólfr fasthaldi; and Thorhalli again a corruption of the first. But Gamli the Vendlander or Widelander, we have no means of identifying.

Page 24. "Now in those times there were wont to be large fire-halls at the homesteads." The hall, *höll*, *skáli*, *stofa*, was the principal room in every home. *Elda-skáli*, or fire-hall, as the one alluded to at Biarg, was so called from its serving as a cooking-hall and a sitting-hall at once. The main features in the construction of a hall were the following: it was generally built from east to west, in an oblong form, having doors either at one or both ends through the south side-wall, where it met the gable end. These two entrances were called carles'-door and queens'-door (*karldyrr*, *kvenndyrr*), being respectively for the ingress and egress of men and women. Sometimes the men's-door was adorned with the beaks (*brandar*) of a hewn-up ship, as was the case with the hall of Thorir of Garth, standing as door-posts on either side. The door led to a front-

hall (*forkáli*, *fortofa*, *and-dyri*, *framhús*), which, sometimes at least, seems to have been portioned off into an inner room (*klefi*), or bay, and the vestibule proper. In the bay were kept victuals, such as fried fish, flour, and sometimes, no doubt, beer. Within, the hall fell into three main portions: the main hall, or the nave, and the aisles on either side thereof (*skot*). The plan of the hall was much like that of one of our regular-built churches without chancel, say like a Suffolk church of the fifteenth century, the nave being lighted by a clerestory, and the aisles running the whole way along the nave, and communicating behind the dais. These aisles were used for sleeping-places; so that along the whole length of the hall, and behind the dais, all was partitioned into bedsteads, open or locked,—open, that is to say, communicating with the nave by a doorless aperture,—locked, that is, shut out of view from the nave (*lok-rekkja*, *lok-hvíla*).

On the wall between nave and aisles, which was covered with a panelling on its inside at least, were hung the shields and weapons of the chief and his retainers, or home-men. Sometimes it was painted with mythic subjects, and adorned with fantastic carvings; on great occasions it was covered with hangings. Along both side-walls ran a row of seats, called benches (*bekkr*), the northmost of which, or the one which faced the sun, was called the nobler bench (*æðri bekkr*), the south-most one, the less noble bench (*úæðri bekkr*). In the middle of either bench was a seat, called the high seat (*öndvegi*); that of the nobler bench being occupied by the chief or head of the house, unless he had for his guest a man nobler than himself, in which case the latter took it; that of the less noble bench being allotted to the noblest among the guests. The nobler bench was on ordinary occasions the bench for the chief and the household, the less noble for the guests. In front of the chief's high-seat were the high-seat-poles which in the early ages of Paganism in the North were objects of much veneration, and must always accompany the chief if he moved his abode, and point out his new homestead, if he fared for it over sea, by the spot where they

drifted ashore, as, when land was sighted, they were thrown overboard. In front of the seat-rows just described were placed the tables whereon the meals were put forth. And when the number of people exceeded the capacity of the ordinary benches, a new row of benches was placed in front of the tables, so that there were two rows of benches down along either side of the hall with the tables between them. The last-named rows of benches were called *forsæti;* and their occupiers, when seated at table, faced those of the upper and lower bench. In the centre of the hall, if of the fashion, as it probably was in early times, of a fire-hall, was a narrow oblong stone-pavement, probably as long as the rows of the benches, whereon fires were lit for heating of the room, for cooking of food in some cases, and for the purpose of lighting up the hall. The smoke that rose from the burning fuel found its way out through the luffer or louvre, in the middle of the ridge of the roof (*ljóri*); the *reyk-beri*, reek-bearer, seems to have been a contrivance for creating draught to carry the smoke out through the *ljóri*. In that end of the hall which was opposite to the entrance was the cross-bench, dais (*pallr*), occupied by the women. Here was also a high seat (*öndvegi á palli*), which was generally taken by the mistress of the house. In our saga it seems that the hall of Sandheaps made an exception to this general rule, as it apparently had the dais immediately within the doorway.

Page 64 (cf. p. 91). It is worth observing here, that Thorvald, son of Asgeir Madpate the younger, dwells at As in Waterdale, about 1013, when Thorgils Makson was slain. When Grettir played, as a youth, on Midfirth-water (or *circa* 1010), he dwelt at Asgeir's-river. We mention this because there has been some confusion about the matter. On the slight authority of the Þáttr af Isleifi biskupi', Biskupa Sögur, I, 54, it has been maintained that he dwelt at Asgeir's-river as late as *circa* 1035, when his daughter Dalla was wooed by Isleif the Bishop (G. Vigfússon, Safn til Sögu Islands, I, 337). On the other hand, the statement of Hungrvaka that he farmed at As (i.e., at the Ridge), at the time aforesaid, has

given rise to the conjecture that thereby must be meant Valdar-As, a farm in Willowdale, near Asgeir's-river, the manor of the Madpate family (G. Vigfússon in Biskupa Sögur, I, 61, note 2). It seems there is no need of setting aside the clear statement of our saga, that the As was As in Waterdale (*see* Index), and not Valdarás in Willowdale at all, or that Thorvald had, by 1013, moved up to the neighbouring country-side of Waterdale, and settled among the kin of his great-grandmother.

Page 94, line 15. "The Men of Meals," is a close translation of the original, which, however, is incorrect; for the men of Meals were Grettir's kin-in-law, and natural allies. The saga means the men of Meal, Kormak and his followers, and the original should be either, þeir Mel-menn, or Mels-menn, or þeir Kormakr frá Mel.

Page 107, lines 11, 12. We have purposely altered the text from: en *þú* öruggr í einangri, *i.e.*, "but thou stout in danger," into: en *þó*, *i.e.*, "but stout in danger none-the-less." The former reading seems barely to give any sense, the last a natural and the required one.

Page 140. Hallmund. Our saga is one among the historic sagas of Iceland which deals with traditions of ancient belief in the spirits of the unknown regions of the land that are interested in the well-being of the mere men who dwell near them. Hallmund and the giant Thorir are the representatives of these powers in our saga. Of these Hallmund is the more interesting of the two, both for his human sympathies, his tragic end, and the poetry ascribed to him. At one time or other he has had a great name in the Icelandic folk-lore among the spirits of the land, the so-called landwights (*land-vættir*), and there is still existing a poem of ancient type, the refrain of which is closely similar to that of Grettir's song on Hallmund, but which is stated to be by some cave-wight that lived in a deep and gloomy cavern somewhere in Deepfirth, on the north side of Broadfirth. In the so-called Bergbúa-þáttr or cave-dweller's tale (Edited by G. Vigfússon in Nordiske Oldskrifter, xxvij, pp. 123-128, and 140-143,

Copenhagen, 1860), this song is said to have been heard by two men, who, on their way to church, had lost their road, and were overtaken by the darkness of night, and, in order to escape straying too far out of their way, sought shelter under the lee of a sheer rock which chanced to be on their way. They soon found the mouth of a cave where they knew not that any cave was to be looked for, whereupon one of the wayfarers set up a cross-mark in the door of the cave, and then with his fellow-traveller sat down on two stones at the mouth of the cave, as they did not dare to risk themselves too far in the gloomy abode away from the cross. When the first third part of the night was spent, they heard something come along from within the cave doorwards out to them.[1] They signed themselves with the sign of the cross, and prayed God's mercy to be on them, for they thought the doings within the deep of the cavern now grew big enough. On looking into the darkness they saw a sight like unto two full-moons, or huge targets, with some monstrous figure (unreadable in the MS.) between them. They thought this was nothing but two eyes, and that no wise narrow of face might he be who bore such torches. Next they heard a chanting of a monstrous kind and in a big voice. A lay there was sung of twelve staves, with the final refrain of each twice repeated.

The poem seems to be a death-song over the cave-kin of the country by the new change of thought brought in by Christianity.

Page 158. "Grettir lay out that summer on Madderdale-heath, and in sundry places, and at whiles he was at Reek-heath." A corroboration of the saga has been clearly set forth by the discovery of a Grettir's-lair, in Axefirth-peak, in 1862. True the saga passes over Grettir's doings on these vast eastern wildernesses, but tradition has preserved the name for the place, and it shows by its construction and position that it must have been constructed by one skilled in choosing

[1] *Innam eptir*, as here rendered, is the reading of the MS. from which Bergbúa-þáttr is edited. *Innar eptir*, as the aforesaid edition of the tale has it, is wrong.

a good fighting stand, and a good and wide view at the same time. An Icelandic farmer has thus given an accurate and reliable description of Grettir's lair:

"In the summer of 1850, when I came north to Axe-firth, I heard talk of a Grettir's lair upon Axefirth-peak.... Many who had seen it made a slight matter of it, which brought me to think it must have few peculiarities of antiquarian interest to show. But on the 7th of September, this summer (1862), I went with the rape-ruler Arni Jonsson of Wood-stead to inspect the lair. Walking up to it from the level ground below took us three minutes. The lair stands in the lower part of a slip of stones beneath some sheer rocks between a sandstone rock, called the carline, and the stone slip from the peak. It is built up of stones, straight as a line, and runs 4¾ ells in length, 10 inches broad, and is, within walls, ⅞ of an ell deep. The half of it is deftly covered in with flat stones, the longest of which are 2 ells 9 inches long, and about half an ell in thickness, and a little more in breadth. Small thin fragments of stone are wedged in between these where their junctures do not close tight, and so firmly are they fixed, that without instruments they may not be removed. One stone in the south wall is so large that we deemed it fully the task of from four to six men to move it when loose. The north side wall is beginning to give way, where the room is covered in. On the outside it is overgrown with black scurf and grey moss. The head end we deemed was the one which is turned to the rock and is not covered in, and evidently has been open from the beginning. Here the floor is overgrown with moss, grass, thyme, ferns, crow-foot, and lady's-mantle. In all likelihood the inmate has closed that part of the room in with hides, when needful. On sitting up, all who went to and fro on the road below, must have been within view; not only those who came from the north of Foxplain (Melrakkaslètta) and Nupasveit, but also far toward the north he had a view even unto the open sea, nay, even unto Budluga-haven. Looking southwards, he must have seen all who came up from the outer firth; for from the lair there is a clear view even unto Burn-

river, past which the high-road goes. A popular tradition says, too, that all who must needs pass this way, when Grettir was in the Peak, had taken at last to going over the top of the peak, where there was no road, but the sheep-wilds of the Axefirthers. The lair-bider, even if he was set on by an overwhelming force, was not easily won, and least of all a man of such prowess as Grettir, except by shot; for he might at a moment's notice take his stand in the rock above his head, where one side only gives the chance of an onset, and where there is an ample supply of loose stones, large and small, on the Peak side of the rock, to defend oneself; on three sides sheer rocks hem in the position, and those overhead are many times the height of a man's."

Page 174. Knave-game. Perhaps the truer rendering would have been "nut-game," if indeed "hnet tafl" here stands not for "hnef-tafl," as we at first supposed. It is undoubtedly true that among the early games of Iceland the "hettafl," "hnottafl," was a distinct kind of game, as was also the "hneftafl," "hnefatafl," knave-game. If we follow the text as it stands, the game that Thorbiorn played is supposed to have borne some resemblance to what is now called in Iceland "refskák," "fox-play," anglice "fox and geese," the aim of which is, by twelve pieces, called lambs, to bring the fox into such a position as to leave him no place to move, whichso way he turns.

Page 200. Pied-belly we call the Ram, although the saga seems to mean that he was called Autumn-belly, which is a name of little, if of any, sense at all. We suppose that *haus-mögóttr*, p. 183, l. 11, and *haust-magi*, p. 200, is one and the same thing, the *t* having spuriously crept into the text through a scribe's inadvertence.

Page 203 (cf. 173, 188, 227). "In such wise Grettir lost his life," etc. The hardest thing to account for, or to bring to an intelligible issue in Grettir's saga, is the incongruity between the statements as to his age at his death and the number of years of his outlawry, as compared with the truthful account of the events told in the saga itself. From the time

when Grettir slew his first man, all the events of the saga may be traced clearly year for year up to his death, and their truthfulness is borne out whensoever they chance to run parallel to events mentioned in other trustworthy sagas, and they fall in with the right time nearly without an exception. But the statement on the page referred to above, that he was fourteen years old when he slew Skeggi, that he was twenty when he dealt with Glam, twenty-five when he fell into outlawry, and forty-four when he was slain, is utterly confuted by the chronology of the saga itself.

These numbers given above are obviously made to fall in with the story in page 188 about the talk of the time of his outlawry at the Thing. The question is stated to have been this: whether he had been a fraction of the twentieth year an outlaw, his friends hoping that in such case a part might count *pro toto*. But the truth of the matter was that he had neither been an outlaw for a fraction of the twentieth year, nor even for anything like nineteen years. He was outlawed at the Thing held in 1016, his year of outlawry dated from Thing to Thing; this talk befell in 1031, consequently he had been full fifteen years and no fraction of a year in outlawry. The story, therefore, of the twenty years, or nineteen years and a fraction, of outlawry falls utterly to the ground when brought to the test of the actual facts as recorded in the saga.

But, despite of this, it is not to be supposed that this episode at the Thing in 1031 is brought in at random and without any cause. There are two obvious reasons for assigning twenty years to the length of Grettir's outlawry, and for bringing into the tale a discussion on that subject just where it is done. The one we may call the reason of traditional belief, the other the reason of dramatic effect. Grettir was indisputably for all reasons the greatest of Icelandic outlaws, and the fond imagination of his biographers at all times urged them to give the longest endurance to the time of his outlawry above all outlaws, without inquiring closely as to whether it agreed with the saga itself or not. The other, or the dramatic motive, lies in bringing in the discussion on

this outlawry just at this particular Thing of 1031; for it was obviously the teller's object to suggest to the reader the hope of the great outlaw's legal restoration to the cherished society of man before the falling of the crushing blow, in order to give an enhanced tragic interest to his end, and he undoubtedly succeeds in doing this. To these reasons, besides others less obvious, we imagine this main inconsistency in Grettir's saga is to be ascribed.

Nevertheless, it is worth observing that blunders of scribes may have in a measure been at work here. If we are not mistaken, most of the existing MSS. of our saga state that when he fell (p. 203) "he was one winter short of"—*var hánum vetri fátt á*—whatever number of years they give as his age. And we venture the suggestion that originally the passage ran thus: var hánum vętri fátt á hálf iv^{tugum},[1] *i.e.*, he lacked one winter of thirty-five years when he was slain. If a subsequent scribe committed the easy blunder of dropping 1 before v, the reading of our original (Edition, 1853) would be the natural result, and an offspring of that same blunder would also as easily be the other reading, common to one class of the Grettir MSS.: var hánum vetri fátt í v^{tugum} or í hinum v. tug, by dropping the syllable "hálf."

If the whole passage on page 203, beginning with the words quoted in the commencement of this note, be not indeed a later interpolation, we believe that all that follows the words, "till the time when he dwelt with Glam, the Thrall," must, indeed, be taken as an interpolation of later commentators.

Our suggestion recommends itself in this at least, that it brings about full harmony between the statements, here treated of, and the saga itself, for when Grettir left the land in 1011 he was fourteen years of age, and twenty years later,

[1] A man of twenty, thirty, forty, etc., is in the Icelandic expressed by the adjective *tvítugr*, *þrítugr*, *fertugr;* a man twenty-five, thirty-five, &c., is *hálf-þrítugr*, *hálf-fertugr*, &c.; the units beyond the tens are expressed by the particle *um*, a man of twenty-one, thirty-seven, or forty-nine, is said to have been *einn* (*i.e.*, vętr, winter) um = beyond, tvítugt, sjö um þrítugt, níu um fertugt, etc.

or 1031, he fell. How far his age thus given agrees or not with the decrepitude of his father, who died in 1015, having been apparently already a bedridden man for some time, is a matter of itself, and need not affect the accuracy of our suggestion, which, however, we only put forth as a conjecture, not having within reach the MSS. of Grettir's saga. A critical examination of these might, perhaps, allow of a more positive discourse on this vexed point, which to all commentators on Grettir has hitherto remained an insoluble riddle.

Page 209, line 26. The original makes Asdis daughter of Skeggi the Shorthanded. This is here corrected agreeably to Landnáma, and other records of her family.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS BY EIRÍKR MAGNUSSON

Page 4, l. 20. 'Harald': in the original, 'the wars of Harald.'
6, l. 19. 'Onund and his folk': in the original, 'Onund and Thrand.'
6, l. 33. 'quailed': in the original, 'were hemmed in.'
9, l. 24. 'outward': in the original, 'westward.'
10, l. 29. 'farmer': in the original, 'steward.'
19, l. 10. 'sent': in the original, 'hauled.'
19, l. 19. 'up the firth': in the original, 'past the firths from the south.'
20, last line. 'Rosmwhale-ness': in the original, 'Walrus-ness.'
23, l. 27. 'the wife of Gamli, the son of Thorhal,' etc.: in the original, 'the wife of Gamli the Venlander, the son of Thorhal.'
28, l. 12. the literal reading is, 'with them grew up a man called Odd; he was a poor man maintained by them.'
33, l. 4. 'lay up': in the original, 'beached up.'
36, l. 20. original, *sauma at höndum*, lit.: 'to sew at hands,' i.e. embroider mittens for.

p. 38, l. 2. 'hard by': in the original, 'hard by on the way to the mainland.'

44, l. 25. 'had had': in the original, 'was having it decked.'

46, l. 30. original, *skjald-þili*, lit.: party-panelling.

56, l. 18. 'pitched their tents': in the original, 'and there put up their awnings (on the ships).'

56, l. 19. 'when they were housed': in the original, 'snug on board.'

59, l. 18. 'Then came to': in the original, 'then was come to live with the Earl.'

60, l. 22. Original, *þver-pallinn*, lit. dais.

64, l. 19. Sentence omitted after 'man he was': 'He went all the way to the eastern common wastes.'

64, l. 22. 'went therein far and wide': in the original, 'gathered in goods from far and wide.'

64, l. 34. 'Without either losing or gaining': in the original, 'without anyone taking sides with either.'

67, l. 6. 'lay up': in the original, 'lay beached up.'

69, l. 15 from bottom. Sentence omitted after 'Asgeir Madpate': 'Audun was a well-to-do bonder and a man of fair dealings.'

71, l. 28. Sentence omitted after: 'they let hold good': 'for they were akin.' (The kinship alluded to is that, according to the Saga, Grettir was third but Audun the fourth in descent from Thordis, the second wife of Onund Tree-foot and afterwards married to Audun Skokul).

72, l. 36. 'but all stood forth': in the original, 'but the mares stood forth.'

73, l. 5. 'Odd stood far before': in the original 'stood forward by.'

73, l. 17. 'the horses': in the original, 'the mares.'

87, l. 2. A prophecy pointing to the death of Jokul, who was slain in the island of Gotland at the behest of Olaf the Holy in 1030.

p. 90, l. 25. 'Wrongs': in the original, 'outlawries.'

90, l. 29. 'These eyes of mine' would be an attempt to reach the original: *sem ek ber eptir*, i.e. 'which I bear about.' It is an emphatic utterance of the ghost, almost as if he said: "and you see what they are like."

93, l. 8. 'a ship lay in': in the original, 'lay beached at.'

96, l. 15. 'in the midst of the sound': in the original, 'across the sound.'

97, l. 4. sale-cloth: cloth for sale, home-spun or wadmal, an ell of which was the unit of currency.

98, l. 12. 'burned those men': in the original, 'in the house.'

101, l. 11. 'they had not much help of men': in the original, 'they had no great number of folk to face.'

105, l. 11. 'as far as': in the original, 'beyond.'

106, l. 29. 'through the winter': in the original, 'through the harvest-tide.'

115, l. 17. 'he failed': i.e. Svein. Grettir said he would not take Svein's ditties amiss seeing that he was the wronged party.

118, l. 3. 'sent it back against Arnor's head': in the original, 'drave the back of it into.'

125, l. 1. Judges, i.e. umpires. The parties to the suit agreed on arbitration rather than take it into the court of law.

125, l. 33. 'Grettir's lot': in the original, 'how his own lot.'

126, l. 2. 'And the more to bring that about': in the original, 'Nay rather than he be free.'

128, l. 5. 'nor shall ye lay that box on me'; i.e. 'nor shall ye slip that gin over me' (=get me into that trap).

137, l. 31. 'many deem others,' etc.; in the original, 'by that many people will judge a man.'

142, l. 33. for 'ride' read 'fare.' He had no horse then.

143, l. 21. Eredwellers' Story (Saga Lib. 2), p. 154.

p. 143, l. 24. 'one summer': in the original, 'that summer.'
144, l. 21. 'that I am with you': in the original, 'that I am in consultation with you.'
148, l. 25. Sentence omitted after 'never met Grettir again': 'thenceforth no one deemed him as of any account.'
149, l. 26. 'Arnor and Biarni': in the original, 'Thorgrim and Arnor and Biarni.'
149, l. 36. 'with both hands': in the original, 'on either hand.'
154, l. 34. 'into the shoulder': in the original, 'up to its back.'
158, l. 24. 'a fair play': in the original, 'a tricky play.'
160, l. 29. 'fared at Yuletide to the stead': in the original, 'fared to worship at Yule,' etc.
161, l. 9. Sentence omitted after 'thereof': 'and as he was a great hand at the undoing of hauntings and the laying of ghosts.'
162, l. 12. the inner chamber.
167, l. 2. Sentence omitted after 'went with it': 'and read the runes.'
181, l. 8. 'men said that both': in the original, 'one or the other of.'
183, l. 12. 'wise': in the original, 'tame.'
183, l. 24. 'watch': in the original, 'cover up.'
188, l. 20. 'nineteen were the winters': in the original, 'nineteen less three months.'
205, l. 16. 'oft have I dealt hardly with him': in the original, 'oft have I been hardly dealt with by him.'
206, l. 5. 'brothers-in-law': in the original, 'sons-in-law.'

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VÖLSUNGA SAGA: THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS AND NIBLUNGS, WITH CERTAIN SONGS FROM THE ELDER EDDA. TRANSLATED FROM THE ICELANDIC BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON & WILLIAM MORRIS

PREFACE

IN offering to the reader this translation of the most complete and dramatic form of the great Epic of the North, we lay no claim to special critical insight, nor do we care to deal at all with vexed questions, but are content to abide by existing authorities, doing our utmost to make our rendering close and accurate, and, if it might be so, at the same time, not over prosaic: it is to the lover of poetry and nature, rather than to the student, that we appeal to enjoy and wonder at this great work, now for the first time, strange to say, translated into English: this must be our excuse for speaking here, as briefly as may be, of things that will seem to the student over well known to be worth mentioning, but which may give some ease to the general reader who comes across our book.

The prose of the Völsunga Saga was composed probably some time in the twelfth century, from floating traditions no doubt; from songs which, now lost, were then known, at least in fragments, to the Sagaman; and finally from songs, which, written down about his time, are still existing: the greater part of these last the reader will find in this book; some inserted amongst the prose text by the original story-teller, and some by the present translators, and the remainder in the latter part of the book, put together as nearly as may be in the order of the story, and forming a metrical version of the greater portion of it.

These Songs from the Elder Edda we will now briefly compare with the prose of the Volsung Story, premising that these are the only metrical sources existing of those from which the Sagaman told his tale.

Except for the short snatch on p. 305 of our translation, nothing is now left of these till we come to the episode of Helgi Hundings-bane, Sigurd's half-brother; there are two songs left relating to this, from which the prose is put together; to a certain extent they cover the same ground; but the latter half of the second is, wisely as we think, left un-

touched by the Sagaman, as its interest is of itself too great not to encumber the progress of the main story; for the sake of its wonderful beauty, however, we could not refrain from rendering it, and it will be found first among the metrical translations that form the second part of this book.

Of the next part of the Saga, the deaths of Sinfjotli and Sigmund, and the journey of Queen Hjordis to the court of King Alf, there is no trace left of any metrical origin; but we meet the Edda once more where Regin tells the tale of his kin to Sigurd, and where Sigurd defeats and slays the sons of Hunding: this lay is known as the Lay of Regin.

The short chapter XVI is abbreviated from a long poem called the Prophecy of Gripir (the Grifir of the Saga), where the whole story to come is told with some detail, and which certainly, if drawn out at length into the prose, would have forestalled the interest of the tale.

In the slaying of the Dragon the Saga adheres very closely to the Lay of Fafnir; for the insertion of the song of the birds to Sigurd the present translators are responsible.

Then comes the waking of Brynhild, and her wise redes to Sigurd, taken from the Lay of Sigrdrifa, the greater part of which, in its metrical form, is inserted by the Sagaman into his prose; but the stanzas relating Brynhild's awaking we have inserted into the text; the latter part, omitted in the prose, we have translated for the second part of our book.

Of Sigurd at Hlymdale, of Gudrun's dream, the magic potion of Grimhild, the wedding of Sigurd consequent on that potion; of the wooing of Brynhild for Gunnar, her marriage to him, of the quarrel of the Queens, the brooding grief and wrath of Brynhild, and the interview of Sigurd with her—of all this, the most dramatic and best-considered part of the tale, there is now no more left that retains its metrical form than the few snatches preserved by the Sagaman, though many of the incidents are alluded to in other poems.

Chapter XXX is met by the poem called the Short Lay of Sigurd, which, fragmentary apparently at the beginning, gives us something of Brynhild's awakening wrath and jeal-

ousy, the slaying of Sigurd, and the death of Brynhild herself; this poem we have translated entire.

The Fragments of the Lay of Brynhild are what is left of a poem partly covering the same ground as this last, but giving a different account of Sigurd's slaying; it is very incomplete, though the Sagaman has drawn some incidents from it; the reader will find it translated in our second part.

But before the death of the heroine we have inserted entire into the text as chapter xxxi the First Lay of Gudrun, the most lyrical, the most complete, and the most beautiful of all the Eddaic poems; a poem that any age or language might count among its most precious possessions.

From this point to the end of the Saga it keeps closely to the Songs of Edda; in chapter xxxii the Sagaman has rendered into prose the Ancient Lay of Gudrun, except for the beginning, which gives again another account of the death of Sigurd: this lay also we have translated.

The grand poem, called the Hell-ride of Brynhild, is not represented directly by anything in the prose, except that the Sagaman has supplied from it a link or two wanting in the lay of Sigrdrifa; it will be found translated in our second part.

The betrayal and slaughter of the Giukings or Niblungs, and the fearful end of Atli and his sons, and court, are recounted in two lays, called the Lays of Atli; the longest of these, the Greenland Lay of Atli, is followed closely by the Sagaman; the shorter one we have translated.

The end of Gudrun, of her daughter by Sigurd, and of her sons by her last husband Jonakr, treated of in the last four chapters of the Saga, are very grandly and poetically given in the songs called the Whetting of Gudrun, and the Lay of Hamdir, which are also among our translations.

These are all the songs of the Edda which the Sagaman has dealt with; but one other, the Lament of Oddrun, we have translated on account of its intrinsic merit.

As to the literary quality of this work we might say much, but we think we may well trust the reader of poetic insight

to break through whatever entanglement of strange manners or unused element may at first trouble him, and to meet the nature and beauty with which it is filled: we cannot doubt that such a reader will be intensely touched by finding, amidst all its wildness and remoteness, such startling realism, such subtilty, such close sympathy with all the passions that may move himself to-day.

In conclusion, we must again say how strange it seems to us, that this Volsung Tale, which is in fact an unversified poem, should never before have been translated into English. For this is the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks—to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been—a story too—then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us.

THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS AND NIBLUNGS

THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO ARE MOST NOTEWORTHY IN THIS STORY

VOLSUNGS

Sigi, son of Odin.
Rerir, son of Sigi, king of Hunland.
Volsung, son of Rerir.
Sigmund, son of Volsung.
Signy, daughter of Volsung.
Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and Signy.
Helgi, son of Sigmund by Borghild.
SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE, posthumous son of Sigmund by Hjordis.
Swanhild, his daughter, by Gudrun, Giuki's daughter.

PEOPLE WHO DEAL WITH THE VOLSUNGS BEFORE SIGURD MEETS BRYNHILD

Siggeir, king of Gothland, husband of Signy.
Borghild, first wife of Sigmund.
Hjordis, his second wife.
King Eylimi, her father.
Hjalprek, king of Denmark.
Alf, his son, second husband of Hjordis.
Regin, the king's smith.
Fafnir, his brother, turned into a dragon.
Otter, his brother, slain by Loki.
Hreidmar, the father of these brothers.
Andvari, a dwarf, first owner of the hoard of the Niblungs, on which he laid a curse when it was taken from him by Loki.

GIUKINGS OR NIBLUNGS

King Giuki.
Grimhild, his wife.

Gunnar,
Hogni, } sons of Giuki.
Guttorm,
GUDRUN, daughter of Giuki, wife of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane.

BUDLUNGS
King Budli.
Atli, his son, second husband of Gudrun.
BRYNHILD, daughter of Budli, first betrothed and love of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane, wife of Gunnar, son of Giuki.
Bekkhild, daughter of Budli, wife of Heimir of Hlymdale.

OTHERS WHO DEAL WITH SIGURD AND THE GIUKINGS
Heimer of Hlymdale, foster-father of Brynhild.
Glaumvor, second wife of Gunnar.
Kostbera, wife of Hogni.
Vingi, an evil counsellor of King Atli.
Niblung, the son of Hogni, who helps Gudrun in the slaying of Atli.
Jormunrek, king of the Goths, husband of Swanhild.
Randver, his son.
Bikki, his evil counsellor.
Jonakr, Gudrun's third husband.
Sorli, Hamdir, and Erp, the sons of Jonakr and Gudrun.

A PROLOGUE IN VERSE

O HEARKEN, ye who speak the English Tongue,
How in a waste land ages long ago,
The very heart of the North bloomed into song
After long brooding o'er this tale of woe!
Hearken, and marvel how it might be so,
That such a sweetness so well crowned could be
Betwixt the ice-hills and the cold grey sea.

Or rather marvel not, that those should cling
Unto the thoughts of great lives passed away,
Whom God has stripped so bare of everything,
Save the one longing to wear through their day,
In fearless wise; the hope the Gods to stay,
When at that last tide gathered wrong and hate
Shall meet blind yearning on the Fields of Fate.

Yea, in the first grey dawning of our race,
This ruth-crowned tangle to sad hearts was dear.
Then rose a seeming sun, the lift gave place
Unto a seeming heaven, far off, but clear;
But that passed too, and afternoon is here;
Nor was the morn so fruitful or so long
But we may hearken when ghosts moan of wrong.

For as amid the clatter of the town
When eve comes on with unabated noise,
The soaring wind will sometimes drop adown
And bear unto our chamber the sweet voice
Of bells that 'mid the swallows do rejoice,
Half-heard, to make us sad, so we awhile
With echoed grief life's dull pain may beguile.

Naught vague, naught base our tale, that seems to say:
"Be wide-eyed, kind; curse not the hand that smites;
Curse not the kindness of a past good day,
Or hope of love; cast by all earth's delights,
For very love: through weary days and nights,
Abide thou, striving howsoe'er in vain,
The inmost love of one more heart to gain!"

So draw ye round and hearken, English Folk,
Unto the best tale pity ever wrought!
Of how from dark to dark bright Sigurd broke,
Of Brynhild's glorious soul with love distraught,
Of Gudrun's weary wandering unto naught,
Of utter love defeated utterly,
Of Grief too strong to give Love time to die!

WILLIAM MORRIS

CHAPTER I. OF SIGI, THE SON OF ODIN.

Of Sigi the Son of Odin

HERE begins the tale, and tells of a man who was named Sigi, and called of men the son of Odin; another man withal is told of in the tale, hight Skadi, a great man and mighty of his hands; yet was Sigi the mightier and the higher of kin, according to the speech of men of that time. Now Skadi had a thrall with whom the story must deal somewhat, Bredi by name, who was called after that work which he had to do; in prowess and might of hand he was equal to men who were held more worthy, yea, and better than some thereof.

Now it is to be told that, on a time, Sigi fared to the hunting of the deer, and the thrall with him; and they hunted deer day-long till the evening; and when they gathered together their prey in the evening, lo, greater and more by far was that which Bredi had slain than Sigi's prey; and this thing he much misliked, and he said that great wonder it was that a very thrall should out-do him in the hunting of deer: so he fell on him and slew him, and buried the body of him thereafter in a snow-drift.

Then he went home at evening tide and says that Bredi had ridden away from him into the wild-wood. "Soon was he out of my sight," he says, "and naught more I wot of him."

Skadi misdoubted the tale of Sigi, and deemed that this was a guile of his, and that he would have slain Bredi. So he sent men to seek for him, and to such an end came their seeking, that they found him in a certain snow-drift; then said Skadi, that men should call that snow-drift Bredi's Drift from henceforth; and thereafter have folk followed, so that in such wise they call every drift that is right great.

Thus it is well seen that Sigi has slain the thrall and murdered him; so he is given forth to be a wolf in holy places, and may no more abide in the land with his father; therewith Odin bare him fellowship from the land, so long a way, that right long it was, and made no stay till he brought him to certain war-ships. So Sigi falls to lying out a-warring with the strength that his father gave him or ever they parted; and

Of Sigi the Son of Odin

happy was he in his warring, and ever prevailed, till he brought it about that he won by his wars land and lordship at the last; and thereupon he took to him a noble wife, and became a great and mighty king, and ruled over the land of the Huns, and was the greatest of warriors. He had a son by his wife, who was called Rerir, who grew up in his father's house, and soon became great of growth, and shapely.

CHAPTER II. OF THE BIRTH OF VOLSUNG, THE SON OF RERIR, WHO WAS THE SON OF SIGI.

NOW Sigi grew old, and had many to envy him, so that at last those turned against him whom he trusted most; yea, even the brothers of his wife; for these fell on him at his unwariest, when there were few with him to withstand them, and brought so many against him, that they prevailed against him, and there fell Sigi and all his folk with him. But Rerir, his son, was not in this trouble, and he brought together so mighty a strength of his friends and the great men of the land, that he got to himself both the lands and kingdom of Sigi his father; and so now, when he deems that the feet under him stand firm in his rule, then he calls to mind that which he had against his mother's brothers, who had slain his father. So the king gathers together a mighty army, and therewith falls on his kinsmen, deeming that if he made their kinship of small account, yet none the less they had first wrought evil against him. So he wrought his will herein, in that he departed not from strife before he had slain all his father's banesmen, though dreadful the deed seemed in every wise. So now he gets land, lordship, and fee, and is become a mightier man than his father before him.

Much wealth won in war gat Rerir to himself, and wedded a wife withal, such as he deemed meet for him, and long they lived together, but had no child to take the heritage after them; and ill-content they both were with that, and prayed the Gods with heart and soul that they might get them a child. And so it is said that Odin hears their prayer, and

Freyia no less hearkens wherewith they prayed unto her: so she, never lacking for all good counsel, calls to her her casket-bearing may, the daughter of Hrimnir the giant, and sets an apple in her hand, and bids her bring it to the king. She took the apple, and did on her the gear of a crow, and went flying till she came whereas the king sat on a mound, and there she let the apple fall into the lap of the king; but he took the apple, and deemed he knew whereto it would avail; so he goes home from the mound to his own folk, and came to the queen, and some deal of that apple she ate. Of the Birth of Volsung

So, as the tale tells, the queen soon knew that she was big with child, but a long time wore or ever she might give birth to the child: so it befell that the king must needs go to the wars, after the custom of kings, that he may keep his own land in peace: and in this journey it came to pass that Rerir fell sick and got his death, being minded to go home to Odin, a thing much desired of many folk in those days.

Now no otherwise it goes with the queen's sickness than heretofore, nor may she be the lighter of her child, and six winters wore away with the sickness still heavy on her; so that at the last she feels that she may not live long; wherefore now she bade cut the child from out of her; and it was done even as she bade; a man-child was it, and great of growth from its birth, as well might be; and they say that the youngling kissed his mother or ever she died; but to him is a name given, and he is called Volsung; and he was king over Hunland in the room of his father. From his early years he was big and strong, and full of daring in all manly deeds and trials, and he became the greatest of warriors, and of good hap in all the battles of his warfaring.

Now when he was fully come to man's estate, Hrimnir the giant sends to him Ljod his daughter; she of whom the tale told, that she brought the apple to Rerir, Volsung's father. So Volsung weds her withal; and long they abode together with good hap and great love. They had ten sons and one daughter, and their eldest son was hight Sigmund, and their daughter Signy; and these two were twins, and in all wise the

Of the Birth of Volsung

foremost and the fairest of the children of Volsung the King, and mighty as all his seed was; even as has been long told from ancient days, and in tales of long ago, with the greatest fame of all men, how that the Volsungs have been great men and high-minded and far above the most of men, both in cunning and in prowess and all things high and mighty.

So says the story that King Volsung let build a noble hall in such a wise, that a big oak-tree stood therein, and that the limbs of the tree blossomed fair out over the roof of the hall, while below stood the trunk within it, and the said trunk did men call Branstock.

CHAPTER III. OF THE SWORD THAT SIGMUND, VOLSUNG'S SON, DREW FROM THE BRANSTOCK.

THERE was a king called Siggeir, who ruled over Gothland, a mighty king and of many folk; he went to meet Volsung the King, and prayed him for Signy his daughter to wife; and the king took his talk well, and his sons withal, but she was loth thereto, yet she bade her father rule in this as in all other things that concerned her; so the king took such rede that he gave her to him, and she was betrothed to King Siggeir; and for the fulfilling of the feast and the wedding, was King Siggeir to come to the house of King Volsung. The king got ready the feast according to his best might, and when all things were ready, came the king's guests and King Siggeir withal at the day appointed, and many a man of great account had Siggeir with him.

The tale tells that great fires were made endlong the hall, and the great tree aforesaid stood midmost thereof; withal folk say that, whenas men sat by the fires in the evening, a certain man came into the hall unknown of aspect to all men; and suchlike array he had, that over him was a spotted cloak, and he was bare-foot, and had linen-breeches knit tight even unto the bone, and he had a sword in his hand as he went up to the Branstock, and a slouched hat upon his head: huge he was, and seeming-ancient, and one-eyed. So he drew his

sword and smote it into the tree-trunk so that it sank in up to the hilts; and all held back from greeting the man. Then he took up the word, and said:

The Sword from the Branstock

"Whoso draweth this sword from this stock, shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than is this."

Therewith out went the old man from the hall, and none knew who he was or whither he went.

Now men stand up, and none would fain be the last to lay hand to the sword, for they deemed that he would have the best of it who might first touch it; so all the noblest went thereto first, and then the others, one after other; but none who came thereto might avail to pull it out, for in nowise would it come away howsoever they tugged at it; but now up comes Sigmund, King Volsung's son, and sets hand to the sword, and pulls it from the stock, even as if it lay loose before him; so good that weapon seemed to all, that none thought he had seen such a sword before, and Siggeir would fain buy it of him at thrice its weight of gold, but Sigmund said:

"Thou mightest have taken the sword no less than I from there whereas it stood, if it had been thy lot to bear it; but now, since it has first of all fallen into my hand, never shalt thou have it, though thou biddest therefor all the gold thou hast."

King Siggeir grew wroth at these words, and deemed Sigmund had answered him scornfully, but whereas he was a wary man and a double-dealing, he made as if he heeded this matter in nowise, yet that same evening he thought how he might reward it, as was well seen afterwards.

Siggeir weds Signy

CHAPTER IV. HOW KING SIGGEIR WEDDED SIGNY, AND BADE KING VOLSUNG AND HIS SONS TO GOTHLAND.

NOW it is to be told that Siggeir goes to bed by Signy that night, and the next morning the weather was fair; then says King Siggeir that he will not bide, lest the wind should wax, or the sea grow impassable; nor is it said that Volsung or his sons letted him herein, and that the less, because they saw that he was fain to get him gone from the feast. But now says Signy to her father,

"I have no will to go away with Siggeir, neither does my heart smile upon him; and I wot, by my fore-knowledge, and from the fetch of our kin, that from his counsel will great evil fall on us if this wedding be not speedily undone."

"Speak in no such wise, daughter!" said he; "for great shame will it be to him, yea, and to us also, to break troth with him, he being sackless; and in naught may we trust him, and no friendship shall we have of him, if these matters are broken off; but he will pay us back in as evil wise as he may; for that alone is seemly, to hold truly to troth given."

So King Siggeir got ready for home, and before he went from the feast he bade King Volsung, his father-in-law, come to see him in Gothland, and all his sons with him, whenas three months should be overpast, and to bring such following with him, as he would have, and as he deemed meet for his honour; and thereby will Siggeir the King pay back for the shortcomings of the wedding-feast, in that he would abide thereat but one night only, a thing not according to the wont of men. So King Volsung gave his word to come on the day named, and the kinsmen-in-law parted, and Siggeir went home with his wife.

CHAPTER V. OF THE SLAYING OF KING VOLSUNG.

The Slaying of Volsung

NOW tells the tale of King Volsung and his sons that they go at the time appointed to Gothland at the bidding of King Siggeir, and put off from the land in three ships, all well manned, and have a fair voyage, and made Gothland late of an evening tide.

But that same night came Signy and called her father and brothers to a privy talk, and told them what she deemed King Siggeir was minded to do, and how that he had drawn together an army no man may meet. "And," says she, "he is minded to do guilefully by you; wherefore I bid you get ye gone back again to your own land, and gather together the mightiest power ye may, and then come back hither and avenge you; neither go ye now to your undoing, for ye shall surely fail not to fall by his wiles if ye turn not on him even as I bid you."

Then spake Volsung the King, "All people and nations shall tell of the word I spake, yet being unborn, wherein I vowed a vow that I would flee in fear from neither fire nor the sword; even so have I done hitherto, and shall I depart therefrom now I am old? Yea withal never shall the maidens mock these my sons at the games, and cry out at them that they fear death; once alone must all men needs die, and from that season shall none escape; so my rede it is that we flee nowhither, but do the work of our hands in as manly wise as we may; a hundred fights have I fought, and whiles I had more, and whiles I had less, and yet ever had I the victory, nor shall it ever be heard tell of me that I fled away or prayed for peace."

Then Signy wept right sore, and prayed that she might not go back to King Siggeir, but King Volsung answered:

"Thou shalt surely go back to thine husband, and abide with him, howsoever it fares with us."

So Signy went home, and they abode there that night; but in the morning, as soon as it was day, Volsung bade his men arise and go aland and make them ready for battle; so they

The Slaying of Volsung

went aland, all of them all-armed, and had not long to wait before Siggeir fell on them with all his army, and the fiercest fight there was betwixt them; and Siggeir cried on his men to the onset all he might; and so the tale tells that King Volsung and his sons went eight times right through Siggeir's folk that day, smiting and hewing on either hand, but when they would do so even once again, King Volsung fell amidst his folk and all his men withal, saving his ten sons, for mightier was the power against them than they might withstand.

But now are all his sons taken, and laid in bonds and led away; and Signy was ware withal that her father was slain, and her brothers taken and doomed to death; then she called King Siggeir apart to talk with her, and said:

"This will I pray of thee, that thou let not slay my brothers hastily, but let them be set awhile in the stocks, for home to me comes the saw that says, *Sweet to eye while seen:* but longer life I pray not for them, because I wot well that my prayer will not avail me."

Then answered Siggeir:

"Surely thou art mad and witless, praying thus for more bale for thy brothers than their present slaying; yet this will I grant thee, for the better it likes me the more they must bear, and the longer their pain is or ever death come to them."

Now he let it be done even as she prayed, and a mighty beam was brought and set on the feet of those ten brethren in a certain place of the wild-wood, and there they sit day-long until night; but at midnight, as they sat in the stocks, there came on them a she-wolf from out the wood; old she was, and both great and evil of aspect; and the first thing she did was to bite one of those brethren till he died, and then she ate him up withal, and went on her way.

But the next morning Signy sent a man to the brethren, even one whom she most trusted, to wot of the tidings; and when he came back he told her that one of them was dead, and great and grievous she deemed it, if they should all fare in like wise, and yet naught might she avail them.

Soon is the tale told thereof: nine nights together came the

she-wolf at midnight, and each night slew and ate up one of the brethren, until all were dead, save Sigmund only; so now, before the tenth night came, Signy sent that trusty man to Sigmund, her brother, and gave honey into his hand, bidding him do it over Sigmund's face, and set a little deal of it in his mouth; so he went to Sigmund and did as he was bidden, and then came home again; and so the next night came the she-wolf according to her wont, and would slay him and eat him even as his brothers; but now she sniffs the breeze from him, whereas he was anointed with the honey, and licks his face all over with her tongue, and then thrusts her tongue into the mouth of him. No fear he had thereof, but caught the she-wolf's tongue betwixt his teeth, and so hard she started back thereat, and pulled herself away so mightily, setting her feet against the stocks, that all was riven asunder; but he ever held so fast that the tongue came away by the roots, and thereof she had her bane. The Slaying of Volsung

But some men say that this same she-wolf was the mother of King Siggeir, who had turned herself into this likeness by troll's lore and witchcraft.

CHAP. VI. OF HOW SIGNY SENT THE CHILDREN OF HER AND SIGGEIR TO SIGMUND.

NOW whenas Sigmund is loosed and the stocks are broken, he dwells in the woods and holds himself there; but Signy sends yet again to wot of the tidings, whether Sigmund were alive or no; but when those who were sent came to him, he told them all as it had betid, and how things had gone betwixt him and the wolf; so they went home and tell Signy the tidings; but she goes and finds her brother, and they take counsel in such wise as to make a house underground in the wild-wood; and so things go on a while, Signy hiding him there, and sending him such things as he needed; but King Siggeir deemed that all the Volsungs were dead.

Now Siggeir had two sons by his wife, whereof it is told that when the eldest was ten winters old, Signy sends him to

Signy sends her children to Sigmund

Sigmund, so that he might give him help, if he would in any wise strive to avenge his father; so the youngling goes to the wood, and comes late in evening-tide to Sigmund's earth-house; and Sigmund welcomed him in seemly fashion, and said that he should make ready their bread; "but I," said he, "will go seek firewood."

Therewith he gives the meal-bag into his hands while he himself went to fetch firing; but when he came back the youngling had done naught at the bread-making. Then asks Sigmund if the bread be ready:

Says the youngling, "I durst not set hand to the meal-sack, because somewhat quick lay in the meal."

Now Sigmund deemed he wotted that the lad was of no such heart as that he would be fain to have him for his fellow; and when he met his sister, Sigmund said that he had come no nigher to the aid of a man though the youngling were with him.

Then said Signy, "Take him and kill him then; for why should such an one live longer?" and even so he did.

So this winter wears, and the next winter Signy sent her next son to Sigmund; and there is no need to make a long tale thereof, for in like wise went all things, and he slew the child by the counsel of Signy.

CHAPTER VII. OF THE BIRTH OF SINFJOTLI THE SON OF SIGMUND.

SO on a tide it befell as Signy sat in her bower, that there came to her a witch-wife exceeding cunning, and Signy talked with her in such wise, "Fain am I," says she, "that we should change semblances together."

She says, "Even as thou wilt then."

And so by her wiles she brought it about that they changed semblances and now the witch-wife sits in Signy's place according to her rede, and goes to bed by the king that night, and he knows not that he has other than Signy beside him.

But the tale tells of Signy, that she fared to the earth-house

of her brother, and prayed him give her harbouring for the night; "For I have gone astray abroad in the woods, and know not whither I am going." Birth of Sinfjotli

So he said she might abide, and that he would not refuse harbour to one lone woman, deeming that she would scarce pay back his good cheer by tale-bearing: so she came into the house, and they sat down to meat, and his eyes were often on her, and a goodly and fair woman she seemed to him; but when they are full, then he says to her, that he is right fain that they should have but one bed that night; she nowise turned away therefrom, and so for three nights together he laid her in bed by him.

Thereafter she fared home, and found the witch-wife, and bade her change semblances again, and she did so.

Now as time wears, Signy brings forth a man-child, who was named Sinfjotli, and when he grew up he was both big and strong, and fair of face, and much like unto the kin of the Volsungs, and he was hardly yet ten winters old when she sent him to Sigmund's earth-house; but this trial she had made of her other sons or ever she had sent them to Sigmund, that she had sewed gloves on to their hands through flesh and skin, and they had borne it ill and cried out thereat; and this she now did to Sinfjotli, and he changed countenance in nowise thereat. Then she flayed off the kirtle so that the skin came off with the sleeves, and said that this would be torment enough for him; but he said,

"Full little would Volsung have felt such a smart as this."

So the lad came to Sigmund, and Sigmund bade him knead their meal up, while he goes to fetch firing; so he gave him the meal-sack, and then went after the wood, and by then he came back had Sinfjotli made an end of his baking. Then asked Sigmund if he had found nothing in the meal.

"I misdoubted me that there was something quick in the meal when I first fell to kneading of it, but I have kneaded it all up together, both the meal and that which was therein, whatsoever it was."

Birth of Sinfjotli

Then Sigmund laughed out, and said,

"Naught wilt thou eat of this bread to-night, for the most deadly of worms hast thou kneaded up therewith."

Now Sigmund was so mighty a man that he might eat venom and have no hurt therefrom; but Sinfjotli might abide whatso venom came on the outside of him, but might neither eat nor drink thereof.

CHAPTER VIII. THE DEATH OF KING SIGGEIR AND OF SIGNY.

THE tale tells that Sigmund thought Sinfjotli over young to help him to his revenge, and will first of all harden him with manly deeds; so in summer-tide they fare wide through the woods and slay men for their wealth; Sigmund deems him to take much after the kin of the Volsungs, though he thinks that he is Siggeir's son, and deems him to have the evil heart of his father, with the might and daring of the Volsungs; withal he must needs think him in nowise a kinsome man, for full oft would he bring Sigmund's wrongs to his memory, and prick him on to slay King Siggeir.

Now on a time as they fare abroad in the woods for the getting of wealth, they find a certain house, and two men with great gold rings asleep therein: now these twain were spell-bound skin-changers, and wolf-skins were hanging up over them in the house; and every tenth day might they come out of those skins; and they were kings' sons: so Sigmund and Sinfjotli do the wolf-skins on them, and then might they nowise come out of them, though forsooth the same nature went with them as heretofore; they howled as wolves howl, but both knew the meaning of that howling; they lay out in the wild-wood, and each went his way, and a word they made betwixt them, that they should risk the onset of seven men, but no more, and that he who was first to be set on should howl in wolfish wise: "Let us not depart from this," says Sigmund, "for thou art young and over-bold, and men will deem the quarry good, when they take thee."

Now each goes his way, and when they were parted, Sigmund meets certain men, and gives forth a wolf's howl; and when Sinfjotli heard it, he went straightway thereto, and slew them all, and once more they parted. But ere Sinfjotli has fared long through the woods, eleven men meet him, and he wrought in such wise that he slew them all, and was awearied therewith, and crawls under an oak, and there takes his rest. Then came Sigmund thither, and said: Death of Siggeir & of Signy

"Why didst thou not call on me?"

Sinfjotli said, "I was loth to call for thy help for the slaying of eleven men."

Then Sigmund rushed at him so hard that he staggered and fell, and Sigmund bit him in the throat. Now that day they might not come out of their wolf-skins: but Sigmund lays the other on his back, and bears him home to the house, and cursed the wolf-gears and gave them to the trolls. Now on a day he saw where two weasels went, and how that one bit the other in the throat, and then ran straightway into the thicket, and took up a leaf and laid it on the wound, and thereon his fellow sprang up quite and clean whole; so Sigmund went out and saw a raven flying with a blade of that same herb to him; so he took it and drew it over Sinfjotli's hurt, and he straightway sprang up as whole as though he had never been hurt. Thereafter they went home to their earth-house, and abode there till the time came for them to put off the wolf-shapes; then they burnt them up with fire, and prayed that no more hurt might come to anyone from them; but in that uncouth guise they wrought many famous deeds in the kingdom and lordship of King Siggeir.

Now when Sinfjotli was come to man's estate, Sigmund deemed he had tried him fully, and or ever a long time has gone by he turns his mind to the avenging of his father, if so it may be brought about; so on a certain day the twain get them gone from their earth-house, and come to the abode of King Siggeir late in the evening, and go into the porch before the hall, wherein were tuns of ale, and there they lie hid: now the queen is ware of them, where they are, and is fain to meet

Death of Siggeir & of Signy

them; and when they met they took counsel, and were of one mind that Volsung should be revenged that same night.

Now Signy and the king had two children of tender age, who played with a golden toy on the floor, and bowled it along the pavement of the hall, running along with it; but therewith a golden ring from off it trundles away into the place where Sigmund and Sinfjotli lay, and off runs the little one to search for the same, and beholds withal where two men are sitting, big and grimly to look on, with overhanging helms and bright white byrnies; so he runs up the hall to his father, and tells him of the sight he has seen, and thereat the king misdoubts of some guile abiding him; but Signy heard their speech, and arose and took both the children, and went out into the porch to them and said:

"Lo ye! these younglings have bewrayed you; come now therefore and slay them!"

Sigmund says, "Never will I slay thy children for telling of where I lay hid."

But Sinfjotli made little enow of it, but drew his sword and slew them both, and cast them into the hall at King Siggeir's feet.

Then up stood the king and cried on his men to take those who had lain privily in the porch through the night. So they ran thither and would lay hands on them, but they stood on their defence well and manly, and long he remembered it who was the nighest to them; but in the end they were borne down by many men and taken, and bonds were set upon them, and they were cast into fetters wherein they sit night long.

Then the king ponders what longest and worst of deaths he shall mete out to them; and when morning came he let make a great barrow of stones and turf; and when it was done, let set a great flat stone midmost inside thereof, so that one edge was aloft, the other alow; and so great it was that it went from wall to wall so that none might pass it.

Now he bids folk take Sigmund and Sinfjotli and set them in the barrow, on either side of the stone, for the worse for them he deemed it that they might hear each the other's speech, and yet that neither might pass one to the other. But

now, while they were covering in the barrow with the turf-slips, thither came Signy, bearing straw with her, and cast it down to Sinfjotli, and bade the thralls hide this thing from the king; they said yea thereto, and therewithal was the barrow closed in. Death of Siggeir & Signy

But when night fell, Sinfjotli said to Sigmund, "Belike we shall scarce need meat for a while, for here has the queen cast swine's flesh into the barrow, and wrapped it round about on the outer side with straw."

Therewith he handles the flesh and finds that therein was thrust Sigmund's sword; and he knew it by the hilts, as mirk as it might be in the barrow, and tells Sigmund thereof, and of that were they both fain enow.

Now Sinfjotli drave the point of the sword up into the big stone, and drew it hard along, and the sword bit on the stone. With that Sigmund caught the sword by the point, and in this wise they sawed the stone between them, and let not or all the sawing was done that need be done, even as the song sings:

Sinfjotli sawed
And Sigmund sawed,
Atwain with main
The stone was done.

Now are they both together loose in the barrow, and soon they cut both through stone and through iron, and bring themselves out thereof. Then they go home to the hall, whenas all men slept there, and bear wood to the hall, and lay fire therein; and withal the folk therein are waked by the smoke, and by the hall burning over their heads.

Then the king cries out, "Who kindled this fire, I burn withal?"

"Here am I," says Sigmund, "with Sinfjotli, my sister's son; and we are minded that thou shalt wot well that all the Volsungs are not yet dead."

Then he bade his sister come out, and take all good things at his hands, and great honour, and fair atonement in that wise, for all her griefs.

But she answered, "Take heed now, and consider, if I have

Death of Siggeir & Signy

kept King Siggeir in memory, and his slaying of Volsung the King! I let slay both my children, whom I deemed worthless for the revenging of our father, and I went into the wood to thee in a witch-wife's shape; and now behold, Sinfjotli is the son of thee and of me both! and therefore has he this so great hardihood and fierceness, in that he is the son both of Volsung's son and Volsung's daughter; and for this, and for nought else, have I so wrought, that King Siggeir might get his bane at last; and all these things have I done that vengeance might fall on him, and that I too might not live long; and merrily now will I die with King Siggeir, though I was naught merry to wed him."

Therewith she kissed Sigmund her brother, and Sinfjotli, and went back again into the fire, and there she died with King Siggeir and all his good men.

But the two kinsmen gathered together folk and ships, and Sigmund went back to his father's land, and drave away thence the king, who had set himself down there in the room of King Volsung.

So Sigmund became a mighty king and far-famed, wise and high-minded: he had to wife one named Borghild, and two sons they had between them, one named Helgi and the other Hamund; and when Helgi was born, Norns came to him, and spake over him, and said that he should be in time to come the most renowned of all kings. Even therewith was Sigmund come home from the wars, and so therewith he gives him the name of Helgi, and these matters as tokens thereof, Land of Rings, Sun-litten Hill, and Sharp-shearing Sword, and withal prayed that he might grow of great fame, and like unto the kin of the Volsungs.

And so it was that he grew up high-minded, and well-beloved, and above all other men in all prowess; and the story tells that he went to the wars when he was fifteen winters old. Helgi was lord and ruler over the army, but Sinfjotli was gotten to be his fellow herein; and so the twain bare sway thereover.

CHAPTER IX. HOW HELGI, THE SON OF SIGMUND, WON KING HODBROD & HIS REALM, AND WEDDED SIGRUN.

Helgi wins King Hodbrod

NOW the tale tells that Helgi in his warring met a king hight Hunding, a mighty king, and lord of many men and many lands; they fell to battle together, and Helgi went forth mightily, and such was the end of that fight that Helgi had the victory, but King Hunding fell and many of his men with him; but Helgi is deemed to have grown greatly in fame because he had slain so mighty a king.

Then the sons of Hunding draw together a great army to avenge their father. Hard was the fight betwixt them; but Helgi goes through the folk of those brothers unto their banner, and there slays these sons of Hunding, Alf and Eyolf, Herward and Hagbard, and wins there a great victory.

Now as Helgi fared from the fight, he met a many women right fair and worthy to look on, who rode in exceeding noble array; but one far excelled them all; then Helgi asked them the name of that their lady and queen, and she named herself Sigrun, and said she was the daughter of King Hogni.

Then said Helgi, "Fare home with us: good welcome shall ye have!"

Then said that king's daughter, "Other work lies before us than to drink with thee."

"Yea, and what work, king's daughter?" said Helgi.

She answers, "King Hogni has promised me to Hodbrod, the son of King Granmar, but I have vowed a vow that I will have him to my husband no more than if he were a crow's son and not a king's; and yet will the thing come to pass, but and if thou standest in the way thereof, and goest against him with an army, and takest me away withal; for verily with no king would I rather bide on bolster than with thee."

"Be of good cheer, king's daughter," said he, "for certes he and I shall try the matter, or ever thou be given to him;

Helgi wins King Hodbrod

yea, we shall behold which may prevail against the other; and hereto I pledge my life."

Thereafter, Helgi sent men with money in their hands to summon his folk to him, and all his power is called together to Red-Berg: and there Helgi abode till such time as a great company came to him from Hedinsey; and therewithal came mighty power from Norvi Sound aboard great and fair ships. Then King Helgi called to him the captain of his ships, who was hight Leif, and asked him if he had told over the tale of his army.

"A thing not easy to tell, lord," says he; "on the ships that came out of Norvi Sound are twelve thousand men, and otherwhere are half as many again."

Then bade King Helgi turn into the firth, called Varin's-firth, and they did so: but now there fell on them so fierce a storm and so huge a sea, that the beat of the waves on board and bow was to hearken to like as the clashing together of high hills broken.

But Helgi bade men fear naught, nor take in any sail, but rather hoist every rag higher than heretofore; but little did they miss of foundering or ever they made land; then came Sigrun, daughter of King Hogni, down on to the beach with a great army, and turned them away thence to a good haven called Gnipalund; but the landsmen see what has befallen and come down to the sea-shore. The brother of King Hodbrod, lord of a land called Swarin's Cairn, cried out to them, and asked them who was captain over that mighty army. Then up stands Sinfjotli, with a helm on his head, bright shining as glass, and a byrny as white as snow; a spear in his hand, and thereon a banner of renown, and a gold-rimmed shield hanging before him; and well he knew with what words to speak to kings:

"Go thou and say, when thou hast made an end of feeding thy swine and thy dogs, and when thou beholdest thy wife again, that here are come the Volsungs, and in this company may King Helgi be found, if Hodbrod be fain of finding him, for his game and his joy it is to fight and win fame,

while thou art kissing the handmaids by the fire-side."

Helgi wins King Hodbrod

Then answered Granmar, "In nowise knowest thou how to speak seemly things, and to tell of matters remembered from of old, whereas thou layest lies on chiefs and lords; most like it is that thou must have long been nourished with wolf-meat abroad in the wild-woods, and hast slain thy brethren; and a marvel it is to behold that thou darest to join thyself to the company of good men and true, thou, who hast sucked the blood of many a cold corpse."

Sinfjotli answered, "Dim belike is grown thy memory now, of how thou wert a witch-wife on Varinsey, and wouldst fain have a man to thee, and chosest me to that same office of all the world; and how thereafter thou wert a Valkyria in Asgarth, and it well-nigh came to this, that for thy sweet sake should all men fight; and nine wolf-whelps I begat on thy body in Lowness, and was the father to them all."

Granmar answers, "Great skill of lying hast thou; yet belike the father of naught at all mayst thou be, since thou wert gelded by the giant's daughters of Thrasness; and lo thou art the stepson of King Siggeir, and wert wont to lie abroad in wilds and woods with the kin of wolves, and unlucky was the hand wherewith thou slewest thy brethren, making for thyself an exceeding evil name."

Said Sinfjotli, "Mindest thou not then, when thou wert stallion Grani's mare, and how I rode thee an amble on Bravoll, and that afterwards thou wert giant Golnir's goatherd?"

Granmar says, "Rather would I feed fowls with the flesh of thee, than wrangle any longer with thee."

Then spake King Helgi, "Better were it for ye, and a more manly deed, to fight, rather than to speak such things as it is a shame even to hearken to; Granmar's sons are no friends of me and of mine, yet are they hardy men none the less."

So Granmar rode away to meet King Hodbrod, at a stead called Sunfells, and the horses of the twain were named Sveipud and Sveggjud. The brothers met in the castle-porch,

Helgi wins King Hodbrod

and Granmar told Hodbrod of the war-news. King Hodbrod was clad in a byrny, and had his helm on his head; he asked:

"What men are anigh, why look ye so wrathful?"

Granmar says, "Here are come the Volsungs, and twelve thousand men of them are afloat off the coast, and seven thousand are at the island called Sok, but at the stead called Grindur is the greatest company of all, and now I deem withal that Helgi and his fellowship have good will to give battle."

Then said the king, "Let us send a message through all our realm, and go against them, neither let any who is fain of fight sit idle at home; let us send word to the sons of Ring, and to King Hogni, and to Alf the Old, for they are mighty warriors."

So the hosts met at Wolfstone, and fierce fight befell there; Helgi rushed forth through the host of his foes, and many a man fell there; at last folk saw a great company of shield-maidens, like burning flames to look on, and there was come Sigrun, the king's daughter. Then King Helgi fell on King Hodbrod, and smote him, and slew him even under his very banner; and Sigrun cried out:

"Have thou thanks for thy so manly deed! now shall we share the land between us, and a day of great good hap this is to me, and for this deed shalt thou get honour and renown, in that thou hast felled to earth so mighty a king."

So Helgi took to him that realm and dwelt there long, when he had wedded Sigrun, and became a king of great honour and renown, though he has naught more to do with this story.

CHAPTER X. THE ENDING OF SINFJOTLI, SIGMUND'S SON.

Ending of Sinfjotli

NOW the Volsungs fare back home, and have gained great renown by these deeds. But Sinfjotli betook himself to warfare anew; and therewith he had sight of an exceeding fair woman, and yearned above all things for her; but that same woman was wooed also of the brother of Borghild, the king's wife: and this matter they fought out betwixt them, and Sinfjotli slew that king; and thereafter he harried far and wide, and had many a battle and ever gained the day; and he became hereby honoured and renowned above all men; but in autumn tide he came home with many ships and abundant wealth.

Then he told his tidings to the king his father, and he again to the queen, and she for her part bids him get him gone from the realm, and made as if she would in nowise see him. But Sigmund said he would not drive him away, and offered her atonement of gold and great wealth for her brother's life, albeit he said he had never erst given weregild to any for the slaying of a man, but no fame it was to uphold wrong against a woman.

So seeing she might not get her own way herein, she said, "Have thy will in this matter, O my lord, for it is seemly so to be."

And now she holds the funeral feast for her brother by the aid and counsel of the king, and makes ready all things therefor in the best of wise, and bade thither many great men.

At that feast, Borghild the queen bare the drink to folk, and she came over against Sinfjotli with a great horn, and said,

"Fall to now and drink, fair stepson!"

Then he took the horn to him, and looked therein, and said,

"Nay, for the drink is charmed drink."

Then said Sigmund, "Give it unto me then;" and therewith he took the horn and drank it off.

But the queen said to Sinfjotli, "Why must other men

Ending of Sinfjotli

needs drink thine ale for thee?" And she came again the second time with the horn, and said, "Come now and drink!" and goaded him with many words.

And he took the horn, and said,

"Guile is in the drink."

And thereon, Sigmund cried out,

"Give it then unto me!"

Again, the third time, she came to him, and bade him drink off his drink, if he had the heart of a Volsung; then he laid hand on the horn, but said,

"Venom is therein."

"Nay, let the lip strain it out then, O son," quoth Sigmund; and by then was he exceeding drunk with drink, and therefore spake he in that wise.

So Sinfjotli drank, and straightway fell down dead to the ground.

Sigmund rose up, and sorrowed nigh to death over him; then he took the corpse in his arms and fared away to the wood, and went till he came to a certain firth; and there he saw a man in a little boat; and that man asked if he would be wafted by him over the firth, and he said yea thereto; but so little was the boat, that they might not all go in it at once, so the corpse was first laid therein, while Sigmund went by the firth-side. But therewith the boat and the man therein vanished away from before Sigmund's eyes.

So thereafter Sigmund turned back home, and drave away the queen, and a little after she died. But Sigmund the King yet ruled his realm, and is deemed ever the greatest champion and king of the old law.

CHAPTER XI. OF KING SIGMUND'S LAST BATTLE, AND OF HOW HE MUST YIELD UP HIS SWORD AGAIN.

THERE was a king called Eylimi, mighty and of great fame, and his daughter was called Hjordis, the fairest and wisest of womankind; and Sigmund hears it told of her that she was meet to be his wife, yea if none else were. So he goes to the house of King Eylimi, who would

make a great feast for him, if so be he comes not thither in the guise of a foe. So messages were sent from one to the other that this present journey was a peaceful one, and not for war; so the feast was held in the best of wise and with many a man thereat; fairs were in every place established for King Sigmund, and all things else were done to the aid and comfort of his journey: so he came to the feast, and both kings hold their state in one hall; thither also was come King Lyngi, son of King Hunding, and he also is a-wooing the daughter of King Eylimi. Sigmund fights his last battle

Now the king deemed he knew that the twain had come thither but for one errand, and thought withal that war and trouble might be looked for from the hands of him who brought not his end about; so he spake to his daughter, and said:

"Thou art a wise woman, and I have spoken it, that thou alone shalt choose a husband for thyself; choose therefore between these two kings, and my rede shall be even as thine."

"A hard and troublous matter," says she; "yet will I choose him who is of greatest fame, King Sigmund to wit, albeit he is well stricken in years."

So to him was she betrothed, and King Lyngi gat him gone. Then was Sigmund wedded to Hjordis, and now each day was the feast better and more glorious than on the day before it. But thereafter Sigmund went back home to Hunland, and King Eylimi, his father-in-law, with him, and King Sigmund betakes himself to the due ruling of his realm.

But King Lyngi and his brethren gather an army together to fall on Sigmund, for as in all matters they were wont to have the worser lot, so did this bite the sorest of all; and they would fain prevail over the might and pride of the Volsungs. So they came to Hunland, and sent King Sigmund word how that they would not steal upon him, and that they deemed he would scarce slink away from them. So Sigmund said he would come and meet them in battle, and drew his power together; but Hjordis was borne into the wood with a certain bondmaid, and mighty wealth went with them; and there she abode the while they fought.

Sigmund fights his last battle

Now the vikings rushed from their ships in numbers not to be borne up against, but Sigmund the King, and Eylimi, set up their banners, and the horns blew up to battle; but King Sigmund let blow the horn his father erst had had, and cheered on his men to the fight, but his army was far the fewest.

Now was that battle fierce and fell, and though Sigmund were old, yet most hardily he fought, and was ever the foremost of his men; no shield or byrny might hold against him, and he went ever through the ranks of his foemen on that day, and no man might see how things would fare between them; many an arrow and many a spear was aloft in the air that day, and so his spae-wrights wrought for him that he got no wound, and none can tell over the tale of those who fell before him, and both his arms were red with blood, even to the shoulders.

But now whenas the battle had dured a while, there came a man into the fight clad in a blue cloak, and with a slouched hat on his head, one-eyed he was, and bare a bill in his hand; and he came against Sigmund the King, and have up his bill against him, and as Sigmund smote fiercely with the sword it fell upon the bill and burst asunder in the midst: thenceforth the slaughter and dismay turned to his side, for the good-hap of King Sigmund had departed from him, and his men fell fast about him; naught did the king spare himself, but the rather cheered on his men; but even as the saw says, *No might 'gainst many*, so was it now proven; and in this fight fell Sigmund the King, and King Eylimi, his father-in-law, in the fore-front of their battle, and therewith the more part of their folk.

CHAP. XII. OF THE SHARDS OF THE SWORD GRAM, AND HOW HJORDIS WENT TO KING ALF.

NOW King Lyngi made for the king's abode, and was minded to take the king's daughter there, but failed herein, for there he found neither wife nor wealth: so he fared through all the realm, and gave his men rule thereover, and now deemed that he had slain all the kin of the

Volsungs, and that he need dread them no more from henceforth. Of the shards of the Sword

Now Hjordis went amidst the slain that night of the battle, and came whereas lay King Sigmund, and asked if he might be healed; but he answered:

"Many a man lives after hope has grown little; but my good-hap has departed from me, nor will I suffer myself to be healed, nor wills Odin that I should ever draw sword again, since this my sword and his is broken; lo now, I have waged war while it was his will."

"Naught ill would I deem matters," said she, "if thou mightest be healed and avenge my father."

The king said, "That is fated for another man; behold now, thou art great with a man-child; nourish him well and with good heed, and the child shall be the noblest and most famed of all our kin: and keep well withal the shards of the sword: thereof shall a goodly sword be made, and it shall be called Gram, and our son shall bear it, and shall work many a great work therewith, even such as eld shall never minish; for his name shall abide and flourish as long as the world shall endure: and let this be enow for thee. But now I grow weary with my wounds, and I will go see our kin that have gone before me."

So Hjordis sat over him till he died at the day-dawning; and then she looked, and behold, there came many ships sailing to the land: then she spake to the handmaid:

"Let us now change raiment, and be thou called by my name, and say that thou art the king's daughter."

And thus they did; but now the vikings behold the great slaughter of men there, and see where two women fare away thence into the wood; and they deem that some great tidings must have befallen, and they leaped ashore from out their ships. Now the captain of these folks was Alf, son of Hjalprek, king of Denmark, who was sailing with his power along the land. So they came into the field among the slain, and saw how many men lay dead there; then the king bade go seek for the women, and bring them thither, and they did so. He asked them what women they were; and, little as the thing seems

Of the shards of the Sword

like to be, the bondmaid answered for the twain, telling of the fall of King Sigmund and King Eylimi, and many another great man, and who they were withal who had wrought the deed. Then the king asks if they wotted where the wealth of the king was bestowed; and then says the bondmaid,

"It may well be deemed that we know full surely thereof."

And therewith she guides them to the place where the treasure lay: and there they found exceeding great wealth; so that men deem they have never seen so many things of price heaped up together in one place. All this they bore to the ships of King Alf, and Hjordis and the bondmaid went with them. Therewith these sail away to their own realm, and talk how that surely on that field had fallen the most renowned of kings.

So the king sits by the tiller, but the women abide in the forecastle; but talk he had with the women and held their counsels of much account.

In such wise the king came home to his realm with great wealth, and he himself was a man exceeding goodly to look on. But when he had been but a little while at home, the queen, his mother, asked him why the fairest of the two women had the fewer rings and the less worthy attire.

"I deem," she said, "that she whom ye have held of least account is the noblest of the twain."

He answered: "I too have misdoubted me, that she is little like a bondwoman, and when we first met, in seemly wise she greeted noble men. Lo now, we will make a trial of the thing."

So on a time as men sat at the drink, the king sat down to talk with the women, and said,

"In what wise do ye note the wearing of the hours, whenas night grows old, if ye may not see the lights of heaven?"

Then says the bondwoman, "This sign have I, that whenas in my youth I was wont to drink much in the dawn, so now when I no longer use that manner, I am yet wont to wake up at that very same tide, and by that token do I know thereof."

Then the king laughed and said, "Ill manners for a king's daughter!" And therewith he turned to Hjordis, and asked her even the same question; but she answered,

"My father erst gave me a little gold ring of such nature, that it groweth cold on my finger in the day-dawning; and that is the sign that I have to know thereof." Of the shards of the Sword

The king answered: "Enow of gold there, where a very bondmaid bore it! but come now, thou hast been long enow hid from me; yet if thou hadst told me all from the beginning, I would have done to thee as though we had both been one king's children: but better than thy deeds will I deal with thee, for thou shalt be my wife, and due jointure will I pay thee whenas thou hast borne me a child."

She spake therewith and told out the whole truth about herself: so there was she held in great honour, and deemed the worthiest of women.

CHAPTER XIII. OF THE BIRTH AND WAXING OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

THE tale tells that Hjordis brought forth a man-child, who was straightly borne before King Hjalprek, and then was the king glad thereof, when he saw the keen eyes in the head of him, and he said that few men would be equal to him or like unto him in any wise. So he was sprinkled with water, and had to name Sigurd, of whom all men speak with one speech and say that none was ever his like for growth and goodliness. He was brought up in the house of King Hjalprek in great love and honour; and so it is, that whenso all the noblest men and greatest kings are named in the olden tales, Sigurd is ever put before them all, for might and prowess, for high mind and stout heart, wherewith he was far more abundantly gifted than any man of the northern parts of the wide world.

So Sigurd waxed in King Hjalprek's house, and there was no child but loved him; through him was Hjordis betrothed to King Alf, and jointure meted to her.

Now Sigurd's foster-father was hight Regin, the son of Hreidmar; he taught him all manner of arts, the chess play, and the lore of runes, and the talking of many tongues, even as the wont was with kings' sons in those days. But on a day

Birth and waxing of Sigurd

when they were together, Regin asked Sigurd, if he knew how much wealth his father had owned, and who had the ward thereof; Sigurd answered, and said that the kings kept the ward thereof.

Said Regin, "Dost thou trust them all utterly?"

Sigurd said, "It is seemly that they keep it till I may do somewhat therewith, for better they wot how to guard it than I do."

Another time came Regin to talk to Sigurd, and said,

"A marvellous thing truly that thou must needs be a horse-boy to the kings, and go about like a running knave."

"Nay," said Sigurd, "it is not so, for in all things I have my will, and whatso thing I desire is granted me with good will."

"Well, then," said Regin, "ask for a horse of them."

"Yea," quoth Sigurd, "and that shall I have, whenso I have need thereof."

Thereafter Sigurd went to the king, and the king said,

"What wilt thou have of us?"

Then said Sigurd, "I would even a horse of thee for my disport."

Then said the king, "Choose for thyself a horse, and whatso thing else thou desirest among my matters."

So the next day went Sigurd to the wood, and met on the way an old man, long-bearded, that he knew not, who asked him whither away.

Sigurd said, "I am minded to choose me a horse; come thou, and counsel me thereon."

"Well then," said he, "go we and drive them to the river which is called Busil-tarn."

They did so, and drave the horses down into the deeps of the river, and all swam back to land but one horse; and that horse Sigurd chose for himself; grey he was of hue, and young of years, great of growth, and fair to look on, nor had any man yet crossed his back.

Then spake the grey-beard, "From Sleipnir's kin is this horse come, and he must be nourished heedfully, for it will

be the best of all horses;" and therewithal he vanished away. Birth and waxing of Sigurd

So Sigurd called the horse Grani, the best of all the horses of the world; nor was the man he met other than Odin himself.

Now yet again spake Regin to Sigurd, and said,

"Not enough is thy wealth, and I grieve right sore that thou must needs run here and there like a churl's son; but I can tell thee where there is much wealth for the winning, and great name and honour to be won in the getting of it."

Sigurd asked where that might be, and who had watch and ward over it.

Regin answered, "Fafnir is his name, and but a little way hence he lies, on the waste of Gnita-heath; and when thou comest there thou mayst well say that thou hast never seen more gold heaped together in one place, and that none might desire more treasure, though he were the most ancient and famed of all kings."

"Young am I," says Sigurd, "yet know I the fashion of this worm, and how that none durst go against him, so huge and evil is he."

Regin said, "Nay it is not so; the fashion and the growth of him is even as of other lingworms, and an over great tale men make of it; and even so would thy forefathers have deemed; but thou, though thou be of the kin of the Volsungs, shalt scarce have the heart and mind of those, who are told of as the first in all deeds of fame."

Sigurd said, "Yea, belike I have little of their hardihood and prowess, but thou hast naught to do to lay a coward's name upon me, when I am scarce out of my childish years. Why dost thou egg me on hereto so busily?"

Regin said, "Therein lies a tale which I must needs tell thee."

"Let me hear the same," said Sigurd.

Regin's tale of his Brothers

CHAP. XIV. REGIN'S TALE OF HIS BROTHERS, AND THE GOLD CALLED ANDVARI'S HOARD.

"THUS the tale begins," said Regin. "Hreidmar was my father's name, a mighty man and a wealthy: and his first son was named Fafnir, his second Otter, and I was the third, and the least of them all both for prowess and good conditions, but I was cunning to work in iron, and silver, and gold, whereof I could make matters that availed somewhat. Other skill my brother Otter followed, and had another nature withal, for he was a great fisher, and above other men herein; in that he had the likeness of an otter by day, and dwelt ever in the river, and bare fish to bank in his mouth, and his prey would he ever bring to our father, and that availed him much: for the most part he kept him in his otter-gear, and then he would come home and eat alone, and slumbering, for on the dry land he might see naught. But Fafnir was by far the greatest and grimmest, and would have all things about called his.

"Now," says Regin, "there was a dwarf called Andvari, who ever abode in that force, which was called Andvari's force, in the likeness of a pike, and got meat for himself, for many fish there were in the force; now Otter, my brother, was ever wont to enter into the force, and bring fish aland, and lay them one by one on the bank. And so it befell that Odin, Loki, and Hœnir, as they went their ways, came to Andvari's force, and Otter had taken a salmon, and ate it slumbering upon the river bank; then Loki took a stone and cast it at Otter, so that he gat his death thereby; the gods were well content with their prey, and fell to flaying off the otter's skin; and in the evening they came to Hreidmar's house, and showed him what they had taken: thereon he laid hands on them, and doomed them to such ransom, as that they should fill the otter skin with gold, and cover it over without with red gold; so they sent Loki to gather gold together for them; he came to Ran, and got her net, and went therewith to Andvari's force, and cast the net before the pike, and the pike ran into the net and was taken. Then said Loki:

"'What fish of all fishes,
Swims strong in the flood,
But hath learnt little wit to beware?
Thine head must thou buy,
From abiding in hell,
And find me the wan waters' flame.'

Regin's tale of his Brothers

"He answered:

"'Andvari folk call me,
Call Oinn my father,
Over many a force have I fared;
For a Norn of ill-luck,
This life on me lay
Through wet ways ever to wade.'

"So Loki beheld the gold of Andvari, and when he had given up the gold, he had but one ring left, and that also Loki took from him; then the dwarf went into a hollow of the rocks, and cried out that that gold-ring, yea and all the gold withal, should be the bane of every man who should own it thereafter.

"Now the gods rode with the treasure to Hreidmar, and fulfilled the otter-skin, and set it on its feet, and they must cover it over utterly with gold: but when this was done then Hreidmar came forth, and beheld yet one of the muzzle hairs, and bade them cover that withal; then Odin drew the ring, Andvari's-loom, from his hand, and covered up the hair therewith; then sang Loki:

"'Gold enow, good enow,
A great weregild, thou hast,
That my head in good hap I may hold;
But thou and thy son
Are naught fated to thrive,
The bane shall it be of you both.'

"Thereafter," says Regin, "Fafnir slew his father and murdered him, nor got I aught of the treasure, and so evil

Regin's tale of his Brothers

he grew, that he fell to lying abroad, and begrudged any share in the wealth to any man, and so became the worst of all worms, and ever now lies brooding upon that treasure: but for me, I went to the king and became his master-smith; and thus is the tale told of how I lost the heritage of my father, and the weregild for my brother."

So spake Regin; but since that time gold is called Ottergild, and for no other cause than this.

But Sigurd answered, "Much hast thou lost, and exceeding evil have thy kinsmen been! but now, make a sword by thy craft, such a sword as that none can be made like unto it; so that I may do great deeds therewith, if my heart avail thereto, and thou wouldst have me slay this mighty dragon."

Regin says, "Trust me well herein; and with that same sword shalt thou slay Fafnir."

CHAPTER XV. OF THE WELDING TOGETHER OF THE SHARDS OF THE SWORD GRAM.

SO Regin makes a sword, and gives it into Sigurd's hands. He took the sword and said,

"Behold thy smithying, Regin!" and therewith smote it into the anvil, and the sword brake; so he cast down the brand, and bade him forge a better.

Then Regin forged another sword, and brought it to Sigurd, who looked thereon.

Then said Regin, "Belike thou art well content therewith, hard master though thou be in smithying."

So Sigurd proved the sword, and brake it even as the first; then he said to Regin,

"Ah, art thou, mayhappen, a traitor and a liar like to those former kin of thine?"

Therewith he went to his mother, and she welcomed him in seemly wise, and they talked and drank together.

Then spake Sigurd, "Have I heard aright, that King Sigmund gave thee the good sword Gram in two pieces?"

"True enough," she said.

So Sigurd said, "Deliver them into my hands, for I would have them."

The Welding of the Sword

She said he looked like to win great fame, and gave him the sword. Therewith went Sigurd to Regin, and bade him make a good sword thereof as he best might; Regin grew wroth thereat, but went into the smithy with the pieces of the sword, thinking well meanwhile that Sigurd pushed his head far enow into the matter of smithying. So he made a sword, and as he bore it forth from the forge, it seemed to the smiths as though fire burned along the edges thereof. Now he bade Sigurd take the sword, and said he knew not how to make a sword if this one failed. Then Sigurd smote it into the anvil, and cleft it down to the stock thereof, and neither burst the sword nor brake it. Then he praised the sword much, and thereafter went to the river with a lock of wool, and threw it up against the stream, and it fell asunder when it met the sword. Then was Sigurd glad, and went home.

But Regin said, "Now whereas I have made the sword for thee, belike thou wilt hold to thy troth given, and wilt go meet Fafnir?"

"Surely will I hold thereto," said Sigurd, "yet first must I avenge my father."

Now Sigurd the older he grew, the more he grew in the love of all men, so that every child loved him well.

CHAPTER XVI. THE PROPHECY OF GRIFIR.

THERE was a man hight Grifir, who was Sigurd's mother's brother, and a little after the forging of the sword Sigurd went to Grifir, because he was a man who knew things to come, and what was fated to men: of him Sigurd asked diligently how his life should go; but Grifir was long or he spake, yet at the last, by reason of Sigurd's exceeding great prayers, he told him all his life and the fate thereof, even as afterwards came to pass. So when Grifir had told him all even as he would, he went back home; and a little after he and Regin met.

Grifir's Prophecy

Then said Regin, "Go thou and slay Fafnir, even as thou hast given thy word."

Sigurd said, "That work shall be wrought; but another is first to be done, the avenging of Sigmund the King and the other of my kinsmen who fell in that their last fight."

CHAPTER XVII. OF SIGURD'S AVENGING OF SIGMUND HIS FATHER.

NOW Sigurd went to the king and spake thus: "Here have I abode a space with you, and I owe you thanks and reward, for great love and many gifts and all due honour; but now will I away from the land and go meet the sons of Hunding, and do them to wit that the Volsungs are not all dead; and your might would I have to strengthen me therein."

So the kings said that they would give him all things soever that he desired, and therewith was a great army got ready, and all things wrought in the most heedful wise, ships and all war-gear, so that his journey might be of the stateliest: but Sigurd himself steered the dragon-keel which was the greatest and noblest; richly wrought were their sails, and glorious to look on.

So they sail and have wind at will; but when a few days were overpast, there arose a great storm on the sea, and the waves were to behold even as the foam of men's blood; but Sigurd bade take in no sail, howsoever they might be riven, but rather to lay on higher than heretofore. But as they sailed past the rocks of a ness, a certain man hailed the ships, and asked who was captain over that navy; then was it told him that the chief and lord was Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, the most famed of all the young men who now are.

Then said the man, "Naught but one thing, certes, do all say of him, that none among the sons of kings may be likened unto him; now fain were I that ye would shorten sail on some of the ships, and take me aboard."

Then they asked him of his name, and he sang:

"Hnikar I hight,
When I gladdened Huginn,
And went to battle,
Bright son of Volsung;
Now may ye call
The carl on the cliff top,
Feng or Fjolnir:
Fain would I with you."

Sigurd avenges Sigmund

They made for land therewith, and took that man aboard. Then quoth Sigurd, as the song says:

"Tell me this, O Hnikar,
Since full well thou knowest
Fate of Gods, good and ill of mankind,
What best our hap foresheweth,
When amid the battle
About us sweeps the sword edge."

Quoth Hnikar:

"Good are many tokens
If thereof men wotted
When the swords are sweeping:
Fair fellow deem I
The dark-winged raven,
In war, to weapon-wielder.

"The second good thing:
When abroad thou goest
For the long road well arrayed,
Good if thou seest
Two men standing,
Fain of fame within the forecourt.

"A third thing:
Good hearing,
The wolf a howling
Abroad under ash boughs;

Sigurd avenges Sigmund

Good hap shalt thou have
Dealing with helm-staves,
If thou seest these fare before thee.

"No man in fight
His face shall turn
Against the moon's sister
Low, late-shining,
For he winneth battle
Who best beholdeth
Through the midmost sword-play,
And the sloping ranks best shapeth.

"Great is the trouble
Of foot ill-tripping,
When arrayed for fight thou farest,
For on both sides about
Are the Dísir by thee,
Guileful, wishful of thy wounding.

"Fair-combed, well-washen
Let each warrior be,
Nor lack meat in the morning,
For who can rule
The eve's returning,
And base to fall before fate grovelling."

Then the storm abated, and on they fared till they came aland in the realm of Hunding's sons, and then Fjolnir vanished away.

Then they let loose fire and sword, and slew men and burnt their abodes, and did waste all before them: a great company of folk fled before the face of them to Lyngi the King, and tell him that men of war are in the land, and are faring with such rage and fury that the like has never been heard of; and that the sons of King Hunding had no great forecast in that they said they would never fear the Volsungs more, for here was come Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, as captain over this army.

So King Lyngi let send the war-message all throughout

his realm, and has no will to flee, but summons to him all such as would give him aid. So he came against Sigurd with a great army, he and his brothers with him, and an exceeding fierce fight befell; many a spear and many an arrow might men see there raised aloft, axes hard driven, shields cleft and byrnies torn, helmets were shivered, skulls split atwain, and many a man felled to the cold earth. Sigurd avenges Sigmund

And now when the fight has long dured in such wise, Sigurd goes forth before the banners, and has the good sword Gram in his hand, and smites down both men and horses, and goes through the thickest of the throng with both arms red with blood to the shoulder; and folk shrank aback before him wheresoever he went, nor would either helm or byrny hold before him, and no man deemed he had ever seen his like. So a long while the battle lasted, and many a man was slain, and furious was the onset; till at last it befell, even as seldom comes to hand, when a land army falls on, that, do whatso they might, naught was brought about; but so many men fell of the sons of Hunding that the tale of them may not be told; and now whenas Sigurd was among the foremost, came the sons of Hunding against him, and Sigurd smote therewith at Lyngi the King, and clave him down, both helm and head, and mail-clad body, and thereafter he smote Hjorward his brother atwain, and then slew all the other sons of Hunding who were yet alive, and the more part of their folk withal.

Now home goes Sigurd with fair victory won, and plenteous wealth and great honour, which he had gotten to him in this journey, and feasts were made for him against he came back to the realm.

But when Sigurd had been at home but a little, came Regin to talk with him, and said:

"Belike thou wilt now have good will to bow down Fafnir's crest according to thy word plighted, since thou hast thus revenged thy father and the others of thy kin."

Sigurd answered, "That will we hold to, even as we have promised, nor did it ever fall from our memory."

The Slaying of Fafnir

CHAPTER XVIII. OF THE SLAYING OF THE WORM FAFNIR.

NOW Sigurd and Regin ride up the heath along that same way wherein Fafnir was wont to creep when he fared to the water; and folk say that thirty fathoms was the height of that cliff along which he lay when he drank of the water below. Then Sigurd spake:

"How sayedst thou, Regin, that this drake was no greater than other lingworms; methinks the track of him is marvellous great?"

Then said Regin, "Make thee a hole, and sit down therein, and whenas the worm comes to the water, smite him into the heart, and so do him to death, and win for thee great fame thereby."

But Sigurd said, "What will betide me if I be before the blood of the worm?"

Says Regin, "Of what avail to counsel thee if thou art still afeard of everything? Little art thou like thy kin in stoutness of heart."

Then Sigurd rides right over the heath; but Regin gets him gone, sore afeard.

But Sigurd fell to digging him a pit, and whiles he was at that work, there came to him an old man with a long beard, and asked what he wrought there, and he told him.

Then answered the old man and said, "Thou doest after sorry counsel: rather dig thee many pits, and let the blood run therein; but sit thee down in one thereof, and so thrust the worm's heart through."

And therewithal he vanished away; but Sigurd made the pits even as it was shown to him.

Now crept the worm down to his place of watering, and the earth shook all about him, and he snorted forth venom on all the way before him as he went; but Sigurd neither trembled nor was adrad at the roaring of him. So whenas the worm crept over the pits, Sigurd thrust his sword under his left shoulder, so that it sank in up to the hilts; then up leapt Sigurd from the pit and drew the sword back again unto

him, and therewith was his arm all bloody, up to the very shoulder.

Now when that mighty worm was ware that he had his death-wound, then he lashed out head and tail, so that all things soever that were before him were broken to pieces.

So whenas Fafnir had his death-wound, he asked, "Who art thou? and who is thy father? and what thy kin, that thou wert so hardy as to bear weapons against me?"

Sigurd answered, "Unknown to men is my kin. I am called a noble beast: neither father have I nor mother, and all alone have I fared hither."

Said Fafnir, "Whereas thou hast neither father nor mother, of what wonder wert thou born then? But now, though thou tellest me not thy name on this my death-day, yet thou knowest verily that thou liest unto me."

He answered, "Sigurd am I called, and my father was Sigmund."

Says Fafnir, "Who egged thee on to this deed, and why wouldst thou be driven to it? Hadst thou never heard how that all folk were adrad of me, and of the awe of my countenance? But an eager father thou hadst, O bright-eyed swain!"

Sigurd answered, "A hardy heart urged me on hereto; and a strong hand and this sharp sword, which well thou knowest now, stood me in stead in the doing of the deed; *Seldom hath hardy eld a faint-heart youth.*"

Fafnir said, "Well, I wot that hadst thou waxed amid thy kin, thou mightest have good skill to slay folk in thine anger; but more of a marvel is it, that thou, a bondsman taken in war, shouldst have the heart to set on me, *for few among bondsmen have heart for the fight.*"

Said Sigurd, "Wilt thou then cast it in my teeth that I am far away from my kin? Albeit I was a bondsman, yet was I never shackled. God wot thou hast found me free enow."

Fafnir answered, "In angry wise dost thou take my speech; but hearken, for that same gold which I have owned shall be thy bane too."

The Slaying of Fafnir

Quoth Sigurd, "Fain would we keep all our wealth till that day of days; yet shall each man die once for all."

Said Fafnir, "Few things wilt thou do after my counsel; but take heed that thou shalt be drowned if thou farest unwarily over the sea; so bide thou rather on the dry land, for the coming of the calm tide."

Then said Sigurd, "Speak, Fafnir, and say, if thou art so exceeding wise, who are the Norns who rule the lot of all mothers' sons."

Fafnir answers, "Many they be and wide apart; for some are of the kin of the Æsir, and some are of Elfin kin, and some there are who are daughters of Dvalin."

Said Sigurd, "How namest thou the holm whereon Surt and the Æsir mix and mingle the water of the sword?"

"Unshapen is that holm hight," said Fafnir.

And yet again he said, "Regin, my brother, has brought about my end, and it gladdens my heart that thine too he bringeth about; for thus will things be according to his will."

And once again he spake, "A countenance of terror I bore up before all folk, after that I brooded over the heritage of my brother, and on every side did I spout out poison, so that none durst come anigh me, and of no weapon was I adrad, nor ever had I so many men before me, as that I deemed myself not stronger than all; for all men were sore afeard of me."

Sigurd answered and said, "Few may have victory by means of that same countenance of terror, for whoso comes amongst many shall one day find that no one man is by so far the mightiest of all."

Then says Fafnir, "Such counsel I give thee that thou take thy horse and ride away at thy speediest, for ofttimes it falls out so, that he who gets a death-wound avenges himself none the less."

Sigurd answered, "Such as thy redes are I will nowise do after them; nay I will ride now to thy lair and take to me that great treasure of thy kin."

"Ride there then," said Fafnir, "and thou shalt find gold enow to suffice thee for all thy life-days; yet shall that gold be thy bane, and the bane of every one soever who owns it." The Slaying of Fafnir

Then up stood Sigurd, and said, "Home would I ride and lose all that wealth, if I deemed that by the losing thereof I should never die; but every brave and true man will fain have his hand on wealth till that last day; but thou, Fafnir, wallow in the death-pain till Death and Hell have thee."

And therewithal Fafnir died.

CHAPTER XIX. OF THE SLAYING OF REGIN, SON OF HREIDMAR.

THEREAFTER came Regin to Sigurd, and said, "Hail, lord and master, a noble victory hast thou won in the slaying of Fafnir, whereas none durst heretofore abide in the path of him; and now shall this deed of fame be of renown while the world stands fast."

Then stood Regin staring on the earth a long while, and presently thereafter spake from heavy mood: "Mine own brother hast thou slain, and scarce may I be called sackless of the deed."

Then Sigurd took his sword Gram and dried it on the earth, and spake to Regin:

"Afar thou faredst when I wrought this deed and tried this sharp sword with the hand and the might of me; with all the might and main of a dragon must I strive, while thou wert laid alow in the heather-bush, wotting not if it were earth or heaven."

Said Regin, "Long might this worm have lain in his lair, if the sharp sword I forged with my hand had not been good at need to thee; had that not been, neither thou nor any man would have prevailed against him as at this time."

Sigurd answers, "Whenas men meet foes in fight, better is stout heart than sharp sword."

Then said Regin, exceeding heavily, "Thou hast slain my brother, and scarce may I be sackless of the deed."

Therewith Sigurd cut out the heart of the worm with the

The Slaying of Regin

sword called Ridil; but Regin drank of Fafnir's blood, and spake, "Grant me a boon, and do a thing little for thee to do. Bear the heart to the fire, and roast it, and give me thereof to eat."

Then Sigurd went his ways and roasted it on a rod; and when the blood bubbled out he laid his finger thereon to essay it, if it were fully done; and then he set his finger in his mouth, and lo, when the heart-blood of the worm touched his tongue, straightway he knew the voice of all fowls, and heard withal how the wood-peckers chattered in the brake beside him:

"There sittest thou, Sigurd, roasting Fafnir's heart for another, that thou shouldest eat thine own self, and then thou shouldest become the wisest of all men."

And another spake: "There lies Regin, minded to beguile the man who trusts in him."

But yet again said the third, "Let him smite the head from off him then, and be only lord of all that gold."

And once more the fourth spake and said, "Ah, the wiser were he if he followed after that good counsel, and rode thereafter to Fafnir's lair, and took to him that mighty treasure that lieth there, and then rode over Hindfell, whereas sleeps Brynhild; for there would he get great wisdom. Ah, wise he were, if he did after your redes, and bethought him of his own weal; *for where wolf's ears are, wolf's teeth are near.*"

Then cried the fifth: "Yea, yea, not so wise is he as I deem him, if he spareth him, whose brother he hath slain already."

At last spake the sixth: "Handy and good rede to slay him, and be lord of the treasure!"

Then said Sigurd, "The time is unborn wherein Regin shall be my bane; nay, rather one road shall both these brothers fare."

And therewith he drew his sword Gram and struck off Regin's head.

Then heard Sigurd the wood-peckers a-singing, even as the song says.

For the first sang:

"Bind thou, Sigurd,
The bright red rings!
Not meet it is
Many things to fear.
A fair may know I,
Fair of all the fairest,
Girt about with gold,
Good for thy getting."

And the second:

"Green go the ways
Toward the hall of Giuki,
That the fates show forth
To those who fare thither;
There the rich king
Reareth a daughter;
Thou shalt deal, Sigurd,
With gold for that sweetling."

And the third:

"A high hall is there
Reared upon Hindfell,
Without all around it
Sweeps the red flame aloft;
Wise men wrought
That wonder of halls
With the unhidden gleam
Of the glory of gold."

Then the fourth sang:

"Soft on the fell
A shield-may sleepeth,
The lime-trees' red plague
Playing about her:
The sleep-thorn set Odin

The Slaying of Regin

Into that maiden
For her choosing in war
The one he willed not."

"Go, son, behold
That may under helm
Whom from battle
Vinskornir bore,
From her may not turn
The torment of sleep,
Dear offspring of kings,
In the dread Norns' despite."

Then Sigurd ate some deal of Fafnir's heart, and the remnant he kept. Then he leapt on his horse and rode along the trail of the worm Fafnir, and so right unto his abiding-place; and he found it open, and beheld all the doors and the gear of them that they were wrought of iron: yea, and all the beams of the house; and it was dug down deep into the earth: there found Sigurd gold exceeding plenteous, and the sword Rotti; and thence he took the Helm of Awe, and the Gold Byrny, and many things fair and good. So much gold he found there, that he thought verily that scarce might two horses, or three belike, bear it thence. So he took all the gold and laid it in two great chests, and set them on the horse Grani, and took the reins of him, but nowise will he stir, neither will he abide smiting. Then Sigurd knows the mind of the horse, and leaps on the back of him, and smites the spurs into him, and off the horse goes even as if he were unladen.

CHAPTER XX. OF SIGURD'S MEETING WITH BRYNHILD ON THE MOUNTAIN.

BY long roads rides Sigurd, till he comes at the last up on to Hindfell, and wends his way south to the land of the Franks; and he sees before him on the fell a great light, as of fire burning, and flaming up even unto the heavens; and when he came thereto, lo, a shield-hung castle before him, and a banner on the topmost thereof: into the castle

went Sigurd, and saw one lying there asleep, and all-armed. Therewith he takes the helm from off the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman; and she was clad in a byrny as closely set on her as though it had grown to her flesh; so he rent it from the collar downwards, and then the sleeves thereof, and ever the sword bit on it as if it were cloth. Then said Sigurd that over-long had she lain asleep; but she asked, Sigurd meets Brynhild

"What thing of great might is that has prevailed to rend my byrny, and draw me from my sleep?"

Even as sings the song:

What bit on the byrny,
Why breaks my sleep away,
Who has turned from me
My wan tormenting?

"Ah, is it so, that here is come Sigurd Sigmundson, bearing Fafnir's helm on his head and Fafnir's bane in his hand?"

Then answered Sigurd:

"Sigmund's son
With Sigurd's sword
E'en now rent down
The raven's wall.

"Of the Volsungs' kin is he who has done the deed; but now I have heard that thou art daughter of a mighty king, and folk have told us that thou wert lovely and full of lore, and now I will try the same."

Then Brynhild sang:

"Long have I slept
And slumbered long,
Many and long are the woes of mankind,
By the might of Odin
Must I bide helpless
To shake from off me the spells of slumber.

Sigurd meets Brynhild

"Hail to the day come back!
Hail, sons of the daylight!
Hail to thee, dark night, and thy daughter!
Look with kind eyes a-down,
On us sitting here lonely,
And give unto us the gain that we long for.

"Hall to the Æsir,
And the sweet Asyniur!
Hail to the fair earth fulfilled of plenty!
Fair words, wise hearts,
Would we win from you,
And healing hands while life we hold."

Then Brynhild speaks again and says, "Two kings fought, one hight Helm-Gunnar, an old man, and the greatest of warriors, and Odin had promised the victory unto him; but his foe was Agnar, or Audi's brother: and so I smote down Helm-Gunnar in the fight; and Odin, in vengeance for that deed, stuck the sleep-thorn into me, and said that I should never again have the victory, but should be given away in marriage; but thereagainst I vowed a vow, that never would I wed one who knew the name of fear."

Then said Sigurd, "Teach us the lore of mighty matters!"

She said, "Belike thou cannest more skill in all than I; yet will I teach thee; yea, and with thanks, if there be aught of my cunning that will in anywise pleasure thee, either of runes or of other matters that are the root of things; but now let us drink together, and may the Gods give to us twain a good day, that thou mayst win good help and fame from my wisdom, and that thou mayst hereafter mind thee of that which we twain speak together."

Then Brynhild filled a beaker and bore it to Sigurd, and gave him the drink of love, and spake:

"Beer bring I to thee,
Fair fruit of the byrnies' clash,
Mixed is it mightily,

Mingled with fame,
Brimming with bright lays
And pitiful runes,
Wise words, sweet words,
Speech of great game.

Sigurd meets Brynhild

"Runes of war know thou,
If great thou wilt be!
Cut them on hilt of hardened sword,
Some on the brand's back,
Some on its shining side,
Twice name Tyr therein.

"Sea-runes good at need,
Learnt for ship's saving,
For the good health of the swimming horse;
On the stern cut them,
Cut them on the rudder-blade
And set flame to shaven oar:
Howso big be the sea-hills,
Howso blue beneath,
Hail from the main then comest thou home.

"Word-runes learn well
If thou wilt that no man
Pay back grief for the grief thou gavest;
Wind thou these,
Weave thou these,
Cast thou these all about thee,
At the Thing,
Where folk throng,
Unto the full doom faring.

"Of ale-runes know the wisdom
If thou wilt that another's wife
Should not bewray thine heart that trusteth;
Cut them on the mead-horn,
On the back of each hand,
And nick an N upon thy nail.

Sigurd meets Brynhild

"Ale have thou heed
To sign from all harm,
Leek lay thou in the liquor,
Then I know for sure
Never cometh to thee
Mead with hurtful matters mingled.

"Help-runes shalt thou gather
If skill thou wouldst gain
To loosen child from low-laid mother;
Cut be they in hands hollow,
Wrapped the joints round about;
Call for the Good-folks' gainsome helping.

"Learn the bough-runes' wisdom
If leech-lore thou lovest;
And wilt wot about wounds' searching
On the bark be they scored;
On the buds of trees
Whose boughs look eastward ever.

"Thought-runes shalt thou deal with
If thou wilt be of all men
Fairest-souled wight, and wisest;
These areded,
These first cut,
These first took to heart high Hropt.

"On the shield were they scored
That stands before the shining God,
On Early-waking's ear,
On All-knowing's hoof,
On the wheel which runneth
Under Rognir's chariot;
On Sleipnir's jaw-teeth,
On the sleigh's traces.

"On the rough bear's paws,
And on Bragi's tongue,

On the wolf's claws,
And on eagle's bill,
On bloody wings,
And bridge's end;
On loosing palms,
And pity's path:

Sigurd meets Brynhild

"On glass, and on gold,
And on goodly silver,
In wine and in wort,
And the seat of the witch-wife;
On Gungnir's point,
And Grani's bosom;
On the Norn's nail,
And the neb of the night-owl.

"All these so cut,
Were shaven and sheared,
And mingled in with holy mead,
And sent upon wide ways enow;
Some abide with the Elves,
Some abide with the Æsir,
Or with the wise Vanir,
Some still hold the sons of mankind.

"These be the book-runes,
And the runes of good help,
And all the ale-runes,
And the runes of much might;
To whomso they may avail,
Unbewildered unspoilt;
They are wholesome to have:
Thrive thou with these then,
When thou hast learnt their lore,
Till the Gods end thy life-days.

"Now shalt thou choose thee
E'en as choice is bidden,
Sharp steel's root and stem,

Sigurd meets Brynhild

Choose song or silence;
See to each in thy heart,
All hurt has been heeded."

Then answered Sigurd:

"Ne'er shall I flee,
Though thou wottest me fey;
Never was I born for blenching,
Thy loved rede will I
Hold aright in my heart
Even as long as I may live."

CHAPTER XXI. MORE WISE WORDS OF BRYNHILD.

SIGURD spake now, "Sure no wiser woman than thou art one may be found in the wide world; yea, yea, teach me more yet of thy wisdom!"

She answers, "Seemly is it that I do according to thy will, and show thee forth more redes of great avail, for thy prayer's sake and thy wisdom;" and she spake withal:

"Be kindly to friend and kin, and reward not their trespasses against thee; bear and forbear, and win for thee thereby long enduring praise of men.

"Take good heed of evil things: a may's love, and a man's wife; full oft thereof doth ill befall!

"Let not thy mind be overmuch crossed by unwise men at thronged meetings of folk; for oft these speak worse than they wot of; lest thou be called a dastard, and art minded to think that thou art even as is said; slay such an one on another day, and so reward his ugly talk.

"If thou farest by the way whereas bide evil things, be well ware of thyself; take not harbour near the highway, though thou be benighted, for oft abide there ill wights for men's bewilderment.

"Let not fair women beguile thee, such as thou mayst meet at the feast, so that the thought thereof stand thee in stead of sleep, and a quiet mind; yea, draw them not to thee with kisses or other sweet things of love.

"If thou hearest the fool's word of a drunken man, strive not with him being drunk with drink and witless; many a grief, yea, and the very death, groweth from out such things. Brynhild's wise words

"Fight thy foes in the field, nor be burnt in thine house.

"Never swear thou wrongsome oath; great and grim is the reward for the breaking of plighted troth.

"Give kind heed to dead men,—sick-dead, sea-dead, or sword-dead; deal heedfully with their dead corpses.

"Trow never in him for whom thou hast slain father, brother, or whatso near kin, yea, though young he be; *for oft waxes wolf in youngling*.

"Look thou with good heed to the wiles of thy friends; but little skill is given to me, that I should foresee the ways of thy life; yet good it were that hate fell not on thee from those of thy wife's house."

Sigurd spake, "None among the sons of men can be found wiser than thou; and thereby swear I, that thee will I have as my own, for near to my heart thou liest."

She answers, "Thee would I fainest choose, though I had all men's sons to choose from."

And thereto they plighted troth both of them.

CHAPTER XXII. OF THE SEMBLANCE AND ARRAY OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S-BANE.

NOW Sigurd rides away; many-folded is his shield, and blazing with red gold, and the image of a dragon is drawn thereon; and this same was dark brown above, and bright red below; and with even such-like image was adorned helm, and saddle, and coat-armour; and he was clad in the golden byrny, and all his weapons were gold-wrought.

Now for this cause was the drake drawn on all his weapons, that when he was seen of men, all folk might know who went there; yea, all those who had heard of his slaying of that great dragon, that the Værings call Fafnir; and for that cause are his weapons gold-wrought, and brown of hue, and that he was by far above other men in courtesy and goodly manners, and well-nigh in all things else; and whenas folk tell of all the mightiest champions, and the noblest chiefs, then ever is he

Of the semblance of Sigurd

named the foremost, and his name goes wide about on all tongues north of the sea of the Greek-lands, and even so shall it be while the world endures.

Now the hair of this Sigurd was golden-red of hue, fair of fashion, and falling down in great locks; thick and short was his beard, and of no other colour; high-nosed he was, broad and high-boned of face; so keen were his eyes, that few durst gaze up under the brows of him; his shoulders were as broad to look on as the shoulders of two; most duly was his body fashioned betwixt height and breadth, and in such wise as was seemliest; and this is the sign told of his height, that when he was girt with his sword Gram, which same was seven spans long, as he went through the full-grown rye-fields, the dew-shoe of the said sword smote the ears of the standing corn; and, for all that, greater was his strength than his growth: well could he wield sword, and cast forth spear, shoot shaft, and hold shield, bend bow, back horse, and do all the goodly deeds that he learned in his youth's days.

Wise he was to know things yet undone; and the voice of all fowls he knew, wherefore few things fell on him unawares.

Of many words he was, and so fair of speech withal, that whensoever he made it his business to speak, he never left speaking before that to all men it seemed full sure, that no otherwise must the matter be than as he said.

His sport and pleasure it was to give aid to his own folk, and to prove himself in mighty matters, to take wealth from his unfriends, and give the same to his friends.

Never did he lose heart, and of naught was he adrad.

CHAPTER XXIII. SIGURD COMES TO HLYMDALE.

FORTH Sigurd rides till he comes to a great and goodly dwelling, the lord whereof was a mighty chief called Heimir; he had to wife a sister of Brynhild, who was hight Bekkhild, because she had bidden at home, and learned handicraft, whereas Brynhild fared with helm and byrny unto the wars, wherefore was she called Brynhild.

Heimir and Bekkhild had a son called Alswid, the most courteous of men.

Sigurd comes to Hlymdale

Now at this stead were men disporting them abroad, but when they see the man riding thereto, they leave their play to wonder at him, for none such had they ever seen erst; so they went to meet him, and gave him good welcome; Alswid bade him abide and have such things at his hands as he would; and he takes his bidding blithesomely; due service withal was established for him; four men bore the treasure of gold from off the horse, and the fifth took it to him to guard the same; therein were many things to behold, things of great price, and seldom seen; and great game and joy men had to look on byrnies and helms, and mighty rings, and wondrous great golden stoups, and all kinds of war weapons.

So there dwelt Sigurd long in great honour holden; and tidings of that deed of fame spread wide through all lands, of how he had slain that hideous and fearful dragon. So good joyance had they there together, and each was leal to other; and their sport was in the arraying of their weapons, and the shafting of their arrows, and the flying of their falcons.

CHAPTER XXIV. SIGURD SEES BRYNHILD AT HLYMDALE.

IN those days came home to Heimir, Brynhild, his foster-daughter, and she sat in her bower with her maidens, and could more skill in handycraft than other women; she sat, overlaying cloth with gold, and sewing therein the great deeds which Sigurd had wrought, the slaying of the Worm, and the taking of the wealth of him, and the death of Regin withal.

Now tells the tale, that on a day Sigurd rode into the wood with hawk, and hound, and men thronging; and whenas he came home his hawk flew up to a high tower, and sat him down on a certain window. Then fared Sigurd after his hawk, and he saw where sat a fair woman, and knew that it was Brynhild, and he deems all things he sees there to be worthy together, both her fairness, and the fair things she wrought: and there-

Sigurd sees Brynhild

with he goes into the hall, but has no more joyance in the games of the men folk.

Then spake Alswid, "Why art thou so bare of bliss? this manner of thine grieveth us thy friends; why then wilt thou not hold to thy gleesome ways? Lo, thy hawks pine now, and thy horse Grani droops; and long will it be ere we are booted thereof?"

Sigurd answered, "Good friend, hearken to what lies on my mind; for my hawk flew up into a certain tower; and when I came thereto and took him, lo there I saw a fair woman, and she sat by a needlework of gold, and did thereon my deeds that are passed, and my deeds that are to come."

Then said Alswid, "Thou hast seen Brynhild, Budli's daughter, the greatest of great women."

"Yea, verily," said Sigurd; "but how came she hither?"

Alswid answered, "Short space there was betwixt the coming hither of the twain of you."

Says Sigurd, "Yea, but a few days agone I knew her for the best of the world's women."

Alswid said, "Give not all thine heed to one woman, being such a man as thou art; ill life to sit lamenting for what we may not have."

"I shall go meet her," says Sigurd, "and get from her love like my love, and give her a gold ring in token thereof."

Alswid answered, "None has ever yet been known whom she would let sit beside her, or to whom she would give drink; for ever will she hold to warfare and to the winning of all kinds of fame."

Sigurd said, "We know not for sure whether she will give us answer or not, or grant us a seat beside her."

So the next day after, Sigurd went to the bower, but Alswid stood outside the bower door, fitting shafts to his arrows.

Now Sigurd spake, "Abide, fair and hale lady,—how farest thou?"

She answered, "Well it fares; my kin and my friends live yet: but who shall say what goodhap folk may bear to their life's end?"

He sat him down by her, and there came in four damsels

with great golden beakers, and the best of wine therein; and these stood before the twain. Sigurd sees Brynhild

Then said Brynhild, "This seat is for few, but and if my father come."

He answered, "Yet is it granted to one that likes me well."

Now that chamber was hung with the best and fairest of hangings, and the floor thereof was all covered with cloth.

Sigurd spake, "Now has it come to pass even as thou didst promise."

"O be thou welcome here!" said she, and arose therewith, and the four damsels with her, and bore the golden beaker to him, and bade him drink; he stretched out his hand to the beaker, and took it, and her hand withal, and drew her down beside him; and cast his arms round about her neck and kissed her, and said:

"Thou art the fairest that was ever born!"

But Brynhild said, "Ah, wiser is it not to cast faith and troth into a woman's power, for ever shall they break that they have promised."

He said, "That day would dawn the best of days over our heads whereon each of each should be made happy."

Brynhild answered, "It is not fated that we should abide together; I am a shield-may, and wear helm on head even as the kings of war, and them full oft I help, neither is the battle become loathsome to me."

Sigurd answered, "What fruit shall be of our life if we live not together: harder to bear this pain that lies hereunder, than the stroke of sharp sword."

Brynhild answers, "I shall gaze on the hosts of the war-kings, but thou shalt wed Gudrun, the daughter of Giuki."

Sigurd answered, "What king's daughter lives to beguile me? neither am I double-hearted herein; and now I swear by the Gods that thee shall I have for mine own, or no woman else."

And even suchlike wise spake she.

Sigurd thanked her for her speech, and gave her a gold ring, and now they swore oath anew, and so he went his ways to his men, and is with them awhile in great bliss.

Gudrun's Dream

CHAPTER XXV. OF THE DREAM OF GUDRUN, GIUKI'S DAUGHTER.

THERE was a king hight Giuki, who ruled a realm south of the Rhine; three sons he had, thus named: Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm, and Gudrun was the name of his daughter, the fairest of maidens; and all these children were far before all other kings' children in all prowess, and in goodliness and growth withal; ever were his sons at the wars and wrought many a deed of fame. But Giuki had wedded Grimhild the Wise-wife.

Now Budli was the name of a king, mightier than Giuki, mighty though they both were: and Atli was the brother of Brynhild: Atli was a fierce man and a grim, great and black to look on, yet noble of mien withal, and the greatest of warriors. Grimhild was a fierce-hearted woman.

Now the days of the Giukings bloomed fair, chiefly because of those children, so far before the sons of men.

On a day Gudrun says to her mays that she may have no joy of heart; then a certain woman asked her wherefore her joy was departed.

She answered, "Grief came to me in my dreams, therefore is there sorrow in my heart, since thou must needs ask thereof."

"Tell it me, then, thy dream," said the woman, "for dreams oft forecast but the weather."

Gudrun answers, "Nay, nay, no weather is this; I dreamed that I had a fair hawk on my wrist, feathered with feathers of gold."

Says the woman, "Many have heard tell of thy beauty, thy wisdom, and thy courtesy; some king's son abides thee, then."

Gudrun answers, "I dreamed that naught was so dear to me as this hawk, and all my wealth had I cast aside rather than him."

The woman said, "Well, then, the man thou shalt have will be of the goodliest, and well shalt thou love him."

Gudrun answered, "It grieves me that I know not who he

shall be; let us go seek Brynhild, for she belike will wot thereof." Gudrun's Dream

So they arrayed them in gold and many a fair thing, and she went with her damsels till they came to the hall of Brynhild, and that hall was dight with gold, and stood on a high hill; and whenas their goings were seen, it was told Brynhild, that a company of women drove toward the burg in gilded waggons.

"That shall be Gudrun, Giuki's daughter," says she: "I dreamed of her last night; let us go meet her; no fairer woman may come to our house."

So they went abroad to meet them, and gave them good greeting, and they went into the goodly hall together; fairly painted it was within, and well adorned with silver vessel; cloths were spread under the feet of them, and all folk served them, and in many wise they sported.

But Gudrun was somewhat silent.

Then said Brynhild, "Ill to abash folk of their mirth; prithee do not so; let us talk together for our disport of mighty kings and their great deeds."

"Good talk," says Gudrun, "let us do even so; what kings deemest thou to have been the first of all men?"

Brynhild says, "The sons of Haki, and Hagbard withal; they brought to pass many a deed of fame in their warfare."

Gudrun answers, "Great men certes, and of noble fame! Yet Sigar took their one sister, and burned the other, house and all; and they may be called slow to revenge the deed; why didst thou not name my brethren, who are held to be the first of men as at this time?"

Brynhild says, "Men of good hope are they surely, though but little proven hitherto; but one I know far before them, Sigurd, the son of Sigmund the King; a youngling was he in the days when he slew the sons of Hunding, and revenged his father, and Eylimi, his mother's father."

Said Gudrun, "By what token tellest thou that?"

Brynhild answered, "His mother went amid the dead, and

Gudrun's Dream

found Sigmund the King sore wounded, and would bind up his hurts; but he said he grew over old for war, and bade her lay this comfort to her heart, that she should bear the most famed of sons; and wise was the wise man's word therein: for after the death of King Sigmund, she went to King Alf, and there was Sigurd nourished in great honour, and day by day he wrought some deed of fame, and is the man most renowned of all the wide world."

Gudrun says, "From love hast thou gained these tidings of him; but for this cause came I here, to tell thee dreams of mine which have brought me great grief."

Says Brynhild, "Let not such matters sadden thee; abide with thy friends who wish thee blithesome, all of them!"

"This I dreamed," said Gudrun, "that we went, a many of us in company, from the bower, and we saw an exceeding great hart, that far excelled all other deer ever seen, and the hair of him was golden; and this deer we were all fain to take, but I alone got him; and he seemed to me better than all things else; but sithence thou, Brynhild, didst shoot and slay my deer even at my very knees, and such grief was that to me that scarce might I bear it; and then afterwards thou gavest me a wolf-cub, which besprinkled me with the blood of my brethren."

Brynhild answers, "I will arede thy dream, even as things shall come to pass hereafter; for Sigurd shall come to thee, even he whom I have chosen for my well-beloved; and Grimhild shall give him mead mingled with hurtful things, which shall cast us all into mighty strife. Him shalt thou have, and him shalt thou quickly miss; and Atli the King shalt thou wed; and thy brethren shalt thou lose, and slay Atli withal in the end."

Gudrun answers, "Grief and woe to know that such things shall be!"

And therewith she and hers get them gone home to King Giuki.

CHAPTER XXVI. SIGURD COMES TO THE GIUKINGS AND IS WEDDED TO GUDRUN.

Sigurd is wedded to Gudrun

NOW Sigurd goes his ways with all that great treasure, and in friendly wise he departs from them; and on Grani he rides with all his war-gear and the burden withal; and thus he rides until he comes to the hall of King Giuki; there he rides into the burg, and that sees one of the king's men, and he spake withal:

"Sure it may be deemed that here is come one of the Gods, for his array is all done with gold, and his horse is far mightier than other horses, and the manner of his weapons is most exceeding goodly, and most of all the man himself far excels all other men ever seen."

So the king goes out with his court and greets the man, and asks,

"Who art thou who thus ridest into my burg, as none has durst hitherto without the leave of my sons?"

He answered, "I am called Sigurd, son of King Sigmund."

Then said King Giuki, "Be thou welcome here, then, and take at our hands whatso thou willest."

So he went into the king's hall, and all men seemed little beside him, and all men served him, and there he abode in great joyancè.

Now oft they all ride abroad together, Sigurd and Gunnar and Hogni, and ever is Sigurd far the foremost of them, mighty men of their hands though they were.

But Grimhild finds how heartily Sigurd loved Brynhild, and how oft he talks of her; and she falls to thinking how well it were, if he might abide there and wed the daughter of King Giuki, for she saw that none might come anigh to his goodliness, and what faith and goodhelp there was in him, and how that he had more wealth withal than folk might tell of any man; and the king did to him even as unto his own sons, and they for their parts held him of more worth than themselves.

So on a night as they sat at the drink, the Queen arose, and went before Sigurd, and said:

Sigurd is wedded to Gudrun

"Great joy we have in thine abiding here, and all good things will we put before thee to take of us; lo now, take this horn and drink thereof."

So he took it and drank, and therewithal she said, "Thy father shall be Giuki the King, and I shall be thy mother, and Gunnar and Hogni shall be thy brethren, and all this shall be sworn with oaths each to each; and then surely shall the like of you never be found on earth."

Sigurd took her speech well, for with the drinking of that drink all memory of Brynhild departed from him. So there he abode awhile.

And on a day went Grimhild to Giuki the King, and cast her arms about his neck, and spake:

"Behold, there has now come to us the greatest of great hearts that the world holds; and needs must he be trusty and of great avail; give him thy daughter then, with plenteous wealth, and as much of rule as he will; perchance thereby he will be well content to abide here ever."

The king answered, "Seldom does it befall that kings offer their daughters to any; yet in higher wise will it be done to offer her to this man, than to take lowly prayers for her from others."

On a night Gudrun pours out the drink, and Sigurd beholds her how fair she is and how full of all courtesy.

Five seasons Sigurd abode there, and ever they passed their days together in good honour and friendship.

And so it befell that the kings held talk together, and Giuki said,

"Great good thou givest us, Sigurd, and with exceeding strength thou strengthenest our realm."

Then Gunnar said, "All things that may be will we do for thee, so thou abidest here long; both dominion shalt thou have, and our sister freely and unprayed for, whom another man would not get for all his prayers."

Sigurd says, "Thanks have ye for this wherewith ye honour me, and gladly will I take the same."

Therewith they swore brotherhood together, and to be

even as if they were children of one father and one mother; and a noble feast was holden, and endured many days, and Sigurd drank at the wedding of him and Gudrun; and there might men behold all manner of game and glee, and each day they feast better and better. Sigurd is wedded to Gudrun

Now fare these folk wide over the world, and do many great deeds, and slay many kings' sons, and no man has ever done such works of prowess as did they; then home they come again with much wealth won in war.

Sigurd gave of the serpent's heart to Gudrun, and she ate thereof, and became greater-hearted, and wiser than e'er before: and the son of these twain was called Sigmund.

Now on a time went Grimhild to Gunnar her son, and spake:

"Fair blooms the life and fortune of thee, but for one thing only, and namely whereas thou art unwedded; go woo Brynhild; good rede is this, and Sigurd will ride with thee."

Gunnar answered, "Fair is she certes, and I am fain enow to win her;" and therewith he tells his father, and his brethren, and Sigurd, and they all prick him on to that wooing.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE WOOING OF BRYNHILD.

NOW they array them joyously for their journey and ride over hill and dale to the house of King Budli, and woo his daughter of him; in a good wise he took their speech, if so be that she herself would not deny them; but he said withal that so high-minded was she, that that man only might wed her whom she would.

Then they ride to Hlymdale, and there Heimir gave them good welcome; so Gunnar tells his errand; Heimir says, that she must needs wed but him whom she herself chose freely; and tells them how her abode was but a little way thence, and that he deemed that him only would she have who should ride through the flaming fire that was drawn round about her hall; so they depart and come to the hall and the fire, and see there a castle with a golden roof-ridge, and all round about a fire roaring up.

The Wooing of Brynhild

Now Gunnar rode on Goti, but Hogni on Holkvi, and Gunnar smote his horse to face the fire, but he shrank aback.

Then said Sigurd, "Why givest thou back, Gunnar?"

He answered, "The horse will not tread this fire; but lend me thy horse Grani."

"Yea, with all my good will," says Sigurd.

Then Gunnar rides him at the fire, and yet nowise will Grani stir, nor may Gunnar any the more ride through that fire. So now they change semblance, Gunnar and Sigurd, even as Grimhild had taught them; then Sigurd in the likeness of Gunnar mounts and rides, Gram in his hand and golden spurs on his heels; then leapt Grani in to the fire when he felt the spurs; and a mighty roar arose as the fire burned ever madder, and the earth trembled, and the flames went up even unto the heavens, nor had any dared to ride as he rode, even as it were through the deep mirk.

But now the fire sank withal, and he leapt from his horse and went into the hall, even as the song says:

The flame flared at its maddest,
Earth's fields fell a-quaking
As the red flame aloft
Licked the lowest of heaven.
Few had been fain,
Of the rulers of folk,
To ride through that flame,
Or athwart it to tread.

Then Sigurd smote
Grani with sword,
And the flame was slaked
Before the king;
Low lay the flames
Before the fain of fame;
Bright gleamed the array
That Regin erst owned.

Now when Sigurd had passed through the fire, he came into a certain fair dwelling, and therein sat Brynhild. The Wooing of Brynhild

She asked, "What man is it?"

Then he named himself Gunnar, son of Giuki, and said:

"Thou art awarded to me as my wife, by the good-will and word of thy father and thy foster-father, and I have ridden through the flames of thy fire, according to thy word that thou hast set forth."

"I wot not clearly," said she, "how I shall answer thee."

Now Sigurd stood upright on the hall floor, and leaned on the hilt of his sword, and he spake to Brynhild:

"In reward thereof, shall I pay thee a great dower in gold and goodly things?"

She answered in heavy mood from her seat, whereas she sat like unto swan on billow, having a sword in her hand, and a helm on her head, and being clad in a byrny, "O Gunnar," she says, "speak not to me of such things; unless thou be the first and best of all men; for then shalt thou slay those my wooers, if thou hast heart thereto; I have been in battles with the king of the Greeks, and our weapons were stained with red blood, and for such things still I yearn."

He answered, "Yea, certes many great deeds hast thou done; but yet call thou to mind thine oath, concerning the riding through of this fire, wherein thou didst swear that thou wouldest go with the man who should do this deed."

So she found that he spake but the sooth, and she paid heed to his words, and arose, and greeted him meetly, and he abode there three nights, and they lay in one bed together; but he took the sword Gram and laid it betwixt them: then she asked him why he laid it there; and he answered, that in that wise must he needs wed his wife or else get his bane.

Then she took from off her the ring Andvari's-loom which he had given her aforetime, and gave it to him, but he gave her another ring out of Fafnir's hoard.

Thereafter he rode away through the same fire unto his fellows, and he and Gunnar changed semblances again, and rode unto Hlymdale, and told how it had gone with them.

The Wooing of Brynhild

That same day went Brynhild home to her foster-father, and tells him as one whom she trusted, how that there had come a king to her; "And he rode through my flaming fire, and said he was come to woo me, and named himself Gunnar; but I said that such a deed might Sigurd alone have done, with whom I plighted troth on the mountain; and he is my first troth-plight, and my well-beloved."

Heimir said that things must needs abide even as now they had now come to pass.

Brynhild said, "Aslaug the daughter of me and Sigurd shall be nourished here with thee."

Now the kings fare home, but Brynhild goes to her father; Grimhild welcomes the kings meetly, and thanks Sigurd for his fellowship; and withal is a great feast made, and many were the guests thereat; and thither came Budli the King with his daughter Brynhild, and his son Atli, and for many days did the feast endure: and at that feast was Gunnar wedded to Brynhild: but when it was brought to an end, once more has Sigurd memory of all the oaths that he sware unto Brynhild, yet withal he let all things abide in rest and peace.

Brynhild and Gunnar sat together in great game and glee, and drank goodly wine.

CHAPTER XXVIII. HOW THE QUEENS HELD ANGRY CONVERSE TOGETHER AT THE BATHING.

ON a day as the Queens went to the river to bathe them, Brynhild waded the farthest out into the river; then asked Gudrun what that deed might signify.

Brynhild said, "Yea, and why then should I be equal to thee in this matter more than in others? I am minded to think that my father is mightier than thine, and my true-love has wrought many wondrous works of fame, and hath ridden the flaming fire withal, while thy husband was but the thrall of King Hjalprek."

Gudrun answered full of wrath, "Thou wouldst be wise

if thou shouldst hold thy peace rather than revile my husband: lo now, the talk of all men it is, that none has ever abode in this world like unto him in all matters soever; and little it beseems thee of all folk to mock him who was thy first beloved: and Fafnir he slew, yea, and he rode thy flaming fire, whereas thou didst deem that he was Gunnar the King, and by thy side he lay, and took from thine hand the ring Andvari's-loom;—here mayst thou well behold it!" How the Queens converse at the Bathing

Then Brynhild saw the ring and knew it, and waxed as wan as a dead woman, and she went home and spake no word the evening long.

So when Sigurd came to bed to Gudrun she asked him why Brynhild's joy was so departed.

He answered, "I know not, but sore I misdoubt me that soon we shall know thereof overwell."

Gudrun said, "Why may she not love her life, having wealth and bliss, and the praise of all men, and the man withal that she would have?"

"Ah, yea!" said Sigurd, "and where in all the world was she then, when she said that she deemed she had the noblest of all men, and the dearest to her heart of all?"

Gudrun answers, "Tomorn will I ask her concerning this, who is the liefest to her of all men for a husband."

Sigurd said, "Needs must I forbid thee this, and full surely wilt thou rue the deed if thou doest it."

Now the next morning they sat in the bower, and Brynhild was silent; then spake Gudrun:

"Be merry, Brynhild! Grievest thou because of that speech of ours together, or what other thing slayeth thy bliss?"

Brynhild answers, "With naught but evil intent thou sayest this, for a cruel heart thou hast."

"Say not so," said Gudrun; "but rather tell me all the tale."

Brynhild answers, "Ask such things only as are good for thee to know—matters meet for mighty dames. Good to love good things when all goes according to thy heart's desire!"

Gudrun says, "Early days for me to glory in that; but this

How the Queens converse at the Bathing

word of thine looketh toward some foreseeing. What ill dost thou thrust at us? I did naught to grieve thee."

Brynhild answers, "For this shalt thou pay, in that thou hast got Sigurd to thee,—nowise can I see thee living in the bliss thereof, whereas thou hast him, and the wealth and the might of him."

But Gudrun answered, "Naught knew I of your words and vows together; and well might my father look to the mating of me without dealing with thee first."

"No secret speech had we," quoth Brynhild, "though we swore oath together; and full well didst thou know that thou wentest about to beguile me; verily thou shalt have thy reward!"

Says Gudrun, "Thou art mated better than thou art worthy of; but thy pride and rage shall be hard to slake belike, and therefor shall many a man pay."

"Ah, I should be well content," said Brynhild, "if thou hadst not the nobler man!"

Gudrun answers, "So noble a husband hast thou, that who knows of a greater king or a lord of more wealth and might?"

Says Brynhild, "Sigurd slew Fafnir, and that only deed is of more worth than all the might of King Gunnar."

(Even as the song says):

The worm Sigurd slew,
Nor e'er shall that deed
Be worsened by age
While the world is alive:
But thy brother the King
Never durst, never bore
The flame to ride down,
Through the fire to fare.

Gudrun answers, "Grani would not abide the fire under Gunnar the King, but Sigurd durst the deed, and thy heart may well abide without mocking him."

Brynhild answers, "Nowise will I hide from thee that I deem no good of Grimhild."

Says Gudrun, "Nay, lay no ill words on her, for in all things she is to thee as to her own daughter."

How the Queens converse at the Bathing

"Ah," says Brynhild, "she is the beginning of all this bale that biteth so; an evil drink she bare to Sigurd, so that he had no more memory of my very name."

"All wrong thou talkest; a lie without measure is this," quoth Gudrun.

Brynhild answered, "Have thou joy of Sigurd according to the measure of the wiles wherewith ye have beguiled me! unworthily have ye conspired against me; may all things go with you as my heart hopes!"

Gudrun says, "More joy shall I have of him than thy wish would give unto me: but to no man's mind it came, that he had aforetime his pleasure of me; nay not once."

"Evil speech thou speakest," says Brynhild; "when thy wrath runs off thou wilt rue it; but come now, let us no more cast angry words one at the other!"

Says Gudrun, "Thou wert the first to cast such words at me, and now thou makest as if thou wouldst amend it, but a cruel and hard heart abides behind."

"Let us lay aside vain babble," says Brynhild. "Long did I hold my peace concerning my sorrow of heart, and, lo now, thy brother alone do I love; let us fall to other talk."

Gudrun said, "Far beyond all this doth thine heart look."

And so ugly ill befell from that going to the river, and that knowing of the ring, wherefrom did all their talk arise.

CHAP. XXIX. OF BRYNHILD'S GREAT GRIEF AND MOURNING.

AFTER this talk Brynhild lay a-bed, and tidings were brought to King Gunnar that Brynhild was sick; he goes to see her thereon, and asks what ails her; but she answered him naught, but lay there as one dead: and when he was hard on her for an answer, she said,

"What didst thou with that ring that I gave thee, even the one which King Budli gave me at our last parting, when thou and King Giuki came to him and threatened fire and the

Brynhild's grief

sword, unless ye had me to wife? Yea, at that time he led me apart, and asked me which I had chosen of those who were come; but I prayed him that I might abide to ward the land and be chief over the third part of his men; then were there two choices for me to deal betwixt, either that I should be wedded to him whom he would, or lose all my weal and friendship at his hands; and he said withal that his friendship would be better to me than his wrath: then I bethought me whether I should yield to his will, or slay many a man; and therewithal I deemed that it would avail little to strive with him, and so it fell out, that I promised to wed whomsoever should ride the horse Grani with Fafnir's Hoard, and ride through my flaming fire, and slay those men whom I called on him to slay, and now so it was, that none durst ride, save Sigurd only, because he lacked no heart thereto; yea, and the Worm he slew, and Regin, and five kings beside; but thou, Gunnar, durst do naught; as pale as a dead man didst thou wax, and no king thou art, and no champion; so whereas I made a vow unto my father, that him alone would I love who was the noblest man alive, and that this is none save Sigurd, lo, now have I broken my oath and brought it to naught, since he is none of mine, and for this cause shall I compass thy death; and a great reward of evil things have I wherewith to reward Grimhild;—never, I wot, has woman lived eviler or of lesser heart than she."

Gunnar answered in such wise that few might hear him, "Many a vile word hast thou spoken, and an evil-hearted woman art thou, whereas thou revilest a woman far better than thou; never would she curse her life as thou dost; nay, nor has she tormented dead folk or murdered any; but lives her life well praised of all."

Brynhild answered, "Never have I dealt with evil things privily, or done loathsome deeds;—yet most fain I am to slay thee."

And therewith would she slay King Gunnar, but Hogni laid her in fetters; but then Gunnar spake withal:

"Nay, I will not that she abide in fetters."

Then said she, "Heed it not! for never again seest thou me glad in thine hall, never drinking, never at the chess-play, never speaking the words of kindness, never overlaying the fair cloths with gold, never giving thee good counsel;—ah, my sorrow of heart that I might not get Sigurd to me!" Brynhild's grief

Then she sat up and smote her needlework, and rent it asunder, and bade set open her bower doors, that far away might the wailings of her sorrow be heard; then great mourning and lamentation there was, so that folk heard it far and wide through that abode.

Now Gudrun asked her bower-maidens why they sat so joyless and downcast. "What has come to you, that ye fare ye as witless women, or what unheard-of wonders have befallen you?"

Then answered a waiting-lady, hight Swaflod, "An untimely, an evil day it is, and our hall is fulfilled of lamentation."

Then spake Gudrun to one of her handmaids, "Arise, for we have slept long; go, wake Brynhild, and let us fall to our needlework and be merry."

"Nay, nay," she says, "nowise may I wake her, or talk with her; for many days has she drunk neither mead nor wine; surely the wrath of the Gods has fallen upon her."

Then spake Gudrun to Gunnar, "Go and see her," she says, "and bid her know that I am grieved with her grief."

"Nay," says Gunnar, "I am forbid to go see her or to share her weal."

Nevertheless he went unto her, and strives in many wise to have speech of her, but gets no answer whatsoever: therefore he gets him gone and finds Hogni, and bids him go see her: he said he was loth thereto, but went, and gat no more of her.

Then they go and find Sigurd, and pray him to visit her; he answered naught thereto, and so matters abode for that night.

But the next day, when he came home from hunting, Sigurd went to Gudrun, and spake:

Brynhild's grief

"In such wise do matters show to me, as though great and evil things will betide from this trouble and upheaving, and that Brynhild will surely die."

Gudrun answers, "O my lord, by great wonders is she encompassed, seven days and seven nights has she slept, and none has dared wake her."

"Nay, she sleeps not," said Sigurd, "her heart is dealing rather with dreadful intent against me."

Then said Gudrun, weeping, "Woe worth the while for thy death! go and see her; and wot if her fury may not be abated; give her gold, and smother up her grief and anger therewith!"

Then Sigurd went out, and found the door of Brynhild's chamber open; he deemed she slept, and drew the clothes from off her, and said,

"Awake, Brynhild! the sun shineth now over all the house, and thou hast slept enough; cast off grief from thee, and take up gladness!"

She said, "And how then hast thou dared to come to me? in this treason none was worse to me than thou."

Said Sigurd, "Why wilt thou not speak to folk? for what cause sorrowest thou?"

Brynhild answers, "Ah, to thee will I tell of my wrath!"

Sigurd said, "As one under a spell art thou, if thou deemest that there is aught cruel in my heart against thee; but thou hast him for husband whom thou didst choose."

"Ah, nay," she said, "never did Gunnar ride through the fire to me, nor did he give me to dower the host of the slain: I wondered at the man who came into my hall; for I deemed indeed that I knew thine eyes; but I might not see clearly, or divide the good from the evil, because of the veil that lay heavy on my fortune."

Says Sigurd, "No nobler men are there than the sons of Giuki, they slew the king of the Danes, and that great chief, the brother of King Budli."

Brynhild answered, "Surely for many an ill deed must I reward them; mind me not of my griefs against them! But

thou, Sigurd, slewest the Worm, and rodest the fire through; yea, and for my sake, and not one of the sons of King Giuki." Brynhild's grief

Sigurd answers, "I am not thy husband, and thou art not my wife; yet did a farfamed king pay dower to thee."

Says Brynhild, "Never looked I at Gunnar in such a wise that my heart smiled on him; and hard and fell am I to him, though I hide it from others."

"A marvellous thing," says Sigurd, "not to love such a king; what angers thee most? for surely his love should be better to thee than gold."

"This is the sorest sorrow to me," she said, "that the bitter sword is not reddened in thy blood."

"Have no fear thereof!" says he; "no long while to wait or the bitter sword stand deep in my heart; and no worse needest thou to pray for thyself, for thou wilt not live when I am dead; the days of our two lives shall be few enough from henceforth."

Brynhild answers, "Enough and to spare of bale is in thy speech, since thou bewrayedst me, and didst twin me and all bliss;—naught do I heed my life or death."

Sigurd answers, "Ah, live, and love King Gunnar and me withal! and all my wealth will I give thee if thou die not."

Brynhild answers, "Thou knowest me not, nor the heart that is in me; for thou art the first and best of all men, and I am become the most loathsome of all women to thee."

"This is truer," says Sigurd, "that I loved thee better than myself, though I fell into the wiles from whence our lives may not escape; for whenso my own heart and mind availed me, then I sorrowed sore that thou wert not my wife; but as I might I put my trouble from me, for in a king's dwelling was I; and withal and in spite of all I was well content that we were all together. Well may it be, that that shall come to pass which is foretold; neither shall I fear the fulfilment thereof."

Brynhild answered and said, "Too late thou tellest me that my grief grieved thee: little pity shall I find now."

Brynhild's grief

Sigurd said, "This my heart would, that thou and I should go into one bed together; even so wouldst thou be my wife."

Said Brynhild, "Such words may nowise be spoken, nor will I have two kings in one hall; I will lay my life down rather than beguile Gunnar the King."

And therewith she calls to mind how they met, they two, on the mountain, and swore oath each to each.

"But now is all changed, and I will not live."

"I might not call to mind thy name," said Sigurd, "or know thee again, before the time of thy wedding; the greatest of all griefs is that."

Then said Brynhild, "I swore an oath to wed the man who should ride my flaming fire, and that oath will I hold to, or die."

"Rather than thou die, I will wed thee, and put away Gudrun," said Sigurd.

But therewithal so swelled the heart betwixt the sides of him, that the rings of his byrny burst asunder.

"I will not have thee," says Brynhild, "nay, nor any other!"

Then Sigurd got him gone.

So saith the song of Sigurd:

Out then went Sigurd,
The great kings' well-loved,
From the speech and the sorrow,
Sore drooping, so grieving,
That the shirt round about him
Of iron rings woven,
From the sides brake asunder
Of the brave in the battle.

So when Sigurd came into the hall, Gunnar asked if he had come to a knowledge of what great grief lay heavy on her, or if she had power of speech: and Sigurd said that she lacked it not. So now Gunnar goes to her again, and asked her, what wrought her woe, or if there were anything that might amend it.

"I will not live," says Brynhild, "for Sigurd has bewrayed

me, yea, and thee no less, whereas thou didst suffer him to come into my bed: lo thou, two men in one dwelling I will not have; and this shall be Sigurd's death, or thy death, or my death;—for now has he told Gudrun all, and she is mocking me even now!" Brynhild's grief

CHAPTER XXX. OF THE SLAYING OF SIGURD FAFNIR'S BANE.

THEREAFTER Brynhild went out, and sat under her bower-wall, and had many words of wailing to say, and still she cried that all things were loathsome to her, both land and lordship alike, so she might not have Sigurd.

But therewith came Gunnar to her yet again, and Brynhild spake, "Thou shalt lose both realm and wealth, and thy life and me, for I shall fare home to my kin, and abide there in sorrow, unless thou slayest Sigurd and his son; never nourish thou a wolfcub."

Gunnar grew sick at heart thereat, and might nowise see what fearful thing lay beneath it all; he was bound to Sigurd by oath, and this way and that way swung the heart within him; but at the last he bethought him of the measureless shame if his wife went from him, and he said within himself, "Brynhild is better to me than all things else, and the fairest woman of all women, and I will lay down my life rather than lose the love of her." And herewith he called to him his brother and spake:

"Trouble is heavy on me," and he tells him that he must needs slay Sigurd, for that he has failed him wherein he trusted him; "so let us be lords of the gold and the realm withal."

Hogni answers, "Ill it behoves us to break our oaths with wrack and wrong, and withal great aid we have in him; no kings shall be as great as we, if so be the King of the Hunfolk may live; such another brother-in-law never may we get again; bethink thee how good it is to have such a brother-in-law, and such sons to our sister! But well I see how things stand, for this has Brynhild stirred thee up to, and surely shall her counsel drag us into huge shame and scathe."

Gunnar says, "Yet shall it be brought about: and, lo, a

The Slaying of Sigurd

rede thereto;—let us egg on our brother Guttorm to the deed; he is young, and of little knowledge, and is clean out of all the oaths moreover."

"Ah, set about in ill wise," says Hogni, "and though indeed it may well be compassed, a due reward shall we gain for the bewrayal of such a man as is Sigurd."

Gunnar says, "Sigurd shall die, or I shall die."

And therewith he bids Brynhild arise and be glad at heart: so she arose, and still ever she said that Gunnar should come no more into her bed till the deed was done.

So the brothers fall to talk, and Gunnar says that it is a deed well worthy of death, that taking of Brynhild's maidenhead; "So come now, let us prick on Guttorm to do the deed."

Therewith they call him to them, and offer him gold and great dominion, as they well have might to do. Yea, and they took a certain worm and somewhat of wolf's flesh and let seethe them together, and gave him to eat of the same, even as the singer sings:

Fish of the wild-wood,
Worm smooth crawling,
With wolf-meat mingled,
They minced for Guttorm;
Then in the beaker,
In the wine his mouth knew,
They set it, still doing
More deeds of wizards.

Wherefore with the eating of this meat he grew so wild and eager, and with all things about him, and with the heavy words of Grimhild, that he gave his word to do the deed; and mighty honour they promised him reward thereof.

But of these evil wiles naught at all knew Sigurd, for he might not deal with this shapen fate, nor the measure of his life-days, neither deemed he that he was worthy of such things at their hands.

So Guttorm went in to Sigurd the next morning as he lay upon his bed, yet durst he not do aught against him, but shrank back out again; yea, and even so he fared a second time, for so bright and eager were the eyes of Sigurd that few durst look upon him. But the third time he went in, and there lay Sigurd asleep; then Guttorm drew his sword and thrust Sigurd through in such wise that the sword-point smote into the bed beneath him; then Sigurd awoke with that wound, and Guttorm gat him unto the door; but therewith Sigurd caught up the sword Gram, and cast it after him, and it smote him on the back, and struck him asunder in the midst so that the feet of him fell one way, and the head and hands back into the chamber. The Slaying of Sigurd

Now Gudrun lay asleep on Sigurd's bosom, but she woke up unto woe that may not be told of, all swimming in the blood of him, and in such wise did she bewail her with weeping and words of sorrow, that Sigurd rose up on the bolster, and spake:

"Weep not," said he, "for thy brothers live for thy delight; but a young son have I, too young to be ware of his foes; and an ill turn have these played against their own fortune; for never will they get a mightier brother-in-law to ride abroad with them; nay, nor a better son to their sister, than this one, if he may grow to man's estate. Lo, now is that come to pass which was foretold me long ago, but from mine eyes has it been hidden, for none may fight against his fate and prevail. Behold, this has Brynhild brought to pass, even she who loves me before all men; but this may I swear, that never have I wrought ill to Gunnar, but rather have ever held fast to my oath with him, nor was I ever too much a friend to his wife. And now if I had been forewarned, and had been afoot with my weapons, then should many a man have lost his life or ever I had fallen, and all those brethren should have been slain, and a harder work would the slaying of me have been than the slaying of the mightiest bull or the mightiest boar of the wild-wood."

And even therewithal life left the King; but Gudrun moaned

The Slaying of Sigurd

and drew a weary breath, and Brynhild heard it, and laughed when she heard her moaning.

Then said Gunnar, "Thou laughest not because thy heart-roots are gladded, or else why doth thy visage wax so wan? Sure an evil creature thou art; most like thou art nigh to thy death! Lo now, how meet would it be for thee to behold thy brother Atli slain before thine eyes, and that thou shouldst stand over him dead; whereas we must needs now stand over our brother-in-law in such a case—our brother-in-law and our brother's bane."

She answered, "None need mock at the measure of slaughter being unfulfilled; yet heedeth not Atli your wrath or your threats; yea, he shall live longer than ye, and be a mightier man."

Hogni spake and said, "Now hath come to pass the sooth-saying of Brynhild; an ill work not to be atoned for."

And Gudrun said, "My kinsmen have slain my husband—but ye, when ye next ride to the war and are come into the battle, then shall ye look about and see that Sigurd is neither on the right hand nor the left, and ye shall know that he was your good-hap and your strength; and if he had lived and had sons, then should ye have been strengthened by his offspring and his kin."

CHAPTER XXXI. OF THE LAMENTATION OF GUDRUN OVER SIGURD DEAD, AS IT IS TOLD IN THE ANCIENT SONGS.

GUDRUN of old days
Drew near to dying
As she sat in sorrow
Over Sigurd;
Yet she sighed not
Nor smote hand on hand,
Nor wailed she aught
As other women.

Then went earls to her,
Full of all wisdom,
Fain help to deal
To her dreadful heart:
Hushed was Gudrun
Of wail or greeting,
But with heavy woe
Was her heart a-breaking.

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

Bright and fair
Sat the great earls' brides,
Gold arrayed
Before Gudrun;
Each told the tale
Of her great trouble,
The bitterest bale
She erst abode.

Then spake Giaflaug,
Giuki's sister:
"Lo upon earth
I live most loveless
Who of five mates
Must see the ending,
Of daughters twain
And three sisters,
Of brethren eight,
And abide behind lonely."

Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail or greeting,
So heavy was she
For her dead husband,
So dreadful-hearted
For the King laid dead there.

Then spake Herborg
Queen of Hunland:

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

"Crueller tale
Have I to tell of,
Of my seven sons
Down in the Southlands,
And the eighth man, my mate,
Felled in the death-mead.

"Father and mother,
And four brothers,
On the wide sea
The winds and death played with:
The billows beat
On the bulwark boards.

"Alone must I sing o'er them,
Alone must I array them,
Alone must my hands deal with
Their departing;
And all this was
In one season's wearing,
And none was left
For love or solace.

"Then was I bound
A prey of the battle,
When that same season
Wore to its ending;
As a tiring may
Must I bind the shoon
Of the duke's high dame,
Every day at dawning.

"From her jealous hate
Gat I heavy mocking,
Cruel lashes
She laid upon me,

Never met I
Better master
Or mistress worser
In all the wide world."

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail or greeting,
So heavy was she
For her dead husband,
So dreadful-hearted
For the King laid dead there.

Then spake Gullrond,
Giuki's daughter:
"O foster-mother,
Wise as thou mayst be,
Naught canst thou better
The young wife's bale."
And she bade uncover
The dead King's corpse.

She swept the sheet
Away from Sigurd,
And turned his cheek
Towards his wife's knees—
"Look on thy loved one
Lay lips to his lips,
E'en as thou wert clinging
To thy king alive yet!"

Once looked Gudrun—
One look only,
And saw her lord's locks
Lying all bloody,
The great man's eyes
Glazed and deadly,

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

And his heart's bulwark
Broken by sword-edge.

Back then sank Gudrun,
Back on the bolster,
Loosed was her head array,
Red did her cheeks grow,
And the rain-drops ran
Down over her knees.

Then wept Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter,
So that the tears flowed
Through the pillow;
As the geese withal
That were in the homefield,
The fair fowls the may owned,
Fell a-screaming.

Then spake Gullrond,
Giuki's daughter:
"Surely knew I
No love like your love
Among all men,
On the mould abiding;
Naught wouldst thou joy in
Without or within doors,
O my sister,
Save beside Sigurd."

Then spoke Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter:
"Such was my Sigurd
Among the sons of Giuki,
As is the king leek
O'er the low grass waxing,
Or a bright stone

Strung on band,
Or a pearl of price
On a prince's brow.

Gudrum laments over Sigurd

"Once was I counted
By the king's warriors
Higher than any
Of Herjan's mays;
Now am I as little
As the leaf may be,
Amid wind-swept wood
Now when dead he lieth.

"I miss from my seat,
I miss from my bed,
My darling of sweet speech.
Wrought the sons of Giuki,
Wrought the sons of Giuki,
This sore sorrow,
Yea, for their sister,
Most sore sorrow.

"So may your lands
Lie waste on all sides,
As ye have broken
Your bounden oaths!
Ne'er shalt thou, Gunnar,
The gold have joy of,
The dear-bought rings
Shall drag thee to death,
Whereon thou swarest
Oath unto Sigurd.

"Ah, in the days by-gone
Great mirth in the homefield
When my Sigurd
Set saddle on Grani,

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

And they went their ways
For the wooing of Brynhild!
An ill day, an ill woman,
And most ill hap!"

Then spake Brynhild,
Budli's daughter:
"May the woman lack
Both love and children,
Who gained greeting
For thee, O Gudrun!
Who gave thee this morning
Many words!"

Then spake Gullrond,
Giuki's daughter:
"Hold peace of such words
Thou hated of all folk!
The bane of brave men
Hast thou been ever,
All waves of ill
Wash over thy mind,
To seven great kings
Hast thou been a sore sorrow
And the death of good will
To wives and women."

Then spake Brynhild,
Budli's daughter:
"None but Atli
Brought bale upon us,
My very brother
Born of Budli.

"When we saw in the hall
Of the Hunnish people
The gold a-gleaming

On the kingly Giukings;
I have paid for that faring
Oft and full,
And for the sight
That then I saw."

Gudrun laments over Sigurd

By a pillar she stood
And strained its wood to her;
From the eyes of Brynhild,
Budli's daughter,
Flashed out fire,
And she snorted forth venom,
As the sore wounds she gazed on
Of the dead-slain Sigurd.

CHAPTER XXXII. OF THE ENDING OF BRYNHILD.

AND now none might know for what cause Brynhild must bewail with weeping for what she had prayed for with laughter: but she spake:

"Such a dream I had, Gunnar, as that my bed was acold, and that thou didst ride into the hands of thy foes: lo now, ill shall it go with thee and all thy kin, O ye breakers of oaths; for on the day thou slayedst him, dimly didst thou remember how thou didst blend thy blood with the blood of Sigurd, and with an ill reward hast thou rewarded him for all that he did well to thee; whereas he gave unto thee to be the mightiest of men; and well was it proven how fast he held to his oath sworn, when he came to me and laid betwixt us the sharp-edged sword that in venom had been made hard. All too soon did ye fall to working wrong against him and against me, whenas I abode at home with my father, and had all that I would, and had no will that anyone of you should be any of mine, as ye rode into our garth, ye three kings together; but then Atli led me apart privily, and asked me if I would not have him who rode Grani;—yea, a man nowise like unto you;

Of the ending of Brynhild

but in those days I plighted myself to the son of King Sigmund and no other; and lo, now, no better shall ye fare for the death of me."

Then rose up Gunnar, and laid his arms about her neck, and besought her to live and have wealth from him; and all others in likewise letted her from dying; but she thrust them all from her, and said that it was not the part of any to let her in that which was her will.

Then Gunnar called to Hogni, and prayed him for counsel, and bade him go to her, and see if he might perchance soften her dreadful heart, saying withal, that now they had need enough on their hands in the slaking of her grief, till time might get over.

But Hogni answered, "Nay, let no man hinder her from dying; for no gain will she be to us, nor has she been gainsome since she came hither!"

Now she bade bring forth much gold, and bade all those come thither who would have wealth: then she caught up a sword, and thrust it under her armpit, and sank aside upon the pillows, and said, "Come, take gold whoso will!"

But all held their peace, and she said, "Take the gold, and be glad thereof!"

And therewith she spake unto Gunnar, "Now for a little while will I tell of that which shall come to pass hereafter; for speedily shall ye be at one again with Gudrun by the rede of Grimhild, the Wise-wife; and the daughter of Gudrun and Sigurd shall be called Swanhild, the fairest of all women born. Gudrun shall be given to Atli, yet not with her good will. Thou shalt be fain to get Oddrun, but that shall Atli forbid thee; but privily shall ye meet, and much shall she love thee. Atli shall bewray thee, and cast thee into a worm-close, and thereafter shall Atli and his sons be slain, and Gudrun shall be their slayer; and afterwards shall the great waves bear her to the burg of King Jonakr, to whom she shall bear sons of great fame: Swanhild shall be sent from the land and given to King Jormunrek; and her shall bite the rede of Bikki, and

therewithal is the kin of you clean gone; and more sorrows therewith for Gudrun.

Of the ending of Brynhild

"And now I pray thee, Gunnar, one last boon.—Let make a great bale on the plain meads for all of us; for me, and for Sigurd, and for those who were slain with him, and let that be covered over with cloth dyed red by the folk of the Gauls, and burn me thereon on one side of the King of the Huns, and on the other those men of mine, two at the head and two at the feet, and two hawks withal; and even so is all shared equally; and lay there betwixt us a drawn sword, as in the other days when we twain stepped into one bed together; and then may we have the name of man and wife, nor shall the door swing to at the heel of him as I go behind him. Nor shall that be a niggard company if there follow him those five bondwomen and eight bondmen, whom my father gave me, and those burn there withal who were slain with Sigurd.

"Now more yet would I say, but for my wounds, but my life-breath flits; the wounds open—yet have I said sooth."

Now is the dead corpse of Sigurd arrayed in olden wise, and a mighty bale is raised, and when it was somewhat kindled there was laid thereon the dead corpse of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane, and his son of three winters whom Brynhild had let slay, and Guttorm withal; and when the bale was all ablaze, thereunto was Brynhild borne out, when she had spoken with her bower-maidens, and bid them take the gold that she would give; and then died Brynhild, and was burned there by the side of Sigurd, and thus their life-days ended.

CHAP. XXXIII. GUDRUN WEDDED TO ATLI.

NOW so it is, that whoso heareth these tidings sayeth, that no such an one as was Sigurd was left behind him in the world, nor ever was such a man brought forth because of all the worth of him, nor may his name ever minish by eld in the Dutch Tongue nor in all the Northern Lands, while the world standeth fast.

The story tells that, on a day, as Gudrun sat in her bower,

Gudrun wedded to Atli

she fell to saying, "Better was life in those days when I had Sigurd; he who was as far above other men as gold is above iron, or the leek over the other grass of the field, or the hart over other wild things; until my brethren begrudged me such a man, the first and best of all men; and so they might not sleep or they had slain him. Huge clamour made Grani when he saw his master and lord sore wounded, and then I spoke to him even as with a man, but he fell drooping down to earth, for he knew that Sigurd was slain."

Thereafter Gudrun gat her gone into the wild woods, and heard on all ways round about her the howling of wolves, and deemed death a merrier thing than life. Then she went till she came to the hall of King Alf, and sat there in Denmark with Thora, the daughter of Hakon, for seven seasons, and abode with good welcome. And she set forth her needlework before her, and did thereinto many deeds and great, and fair plays after the fashion of those days, swords and byrnies, and all the gear of kings, and the ship of King Sigmund sailing along the land; yea, and they wrought there, how they fought, Sigar and Siggeir, south in Fion. Such was their disport; and now Gudrun was somewhat solaced of her grief.

So Grimhild comes to hear where Gudrun has taken up her abode, and she calls her sons to talk with her, and asks whether they will make atonement to Gudrun for her son and her husband, and said that it was but meet and right to do so.

Then Gunnar spake, and said that he would atone for her sorrows with gold.

So they send for their friends, and array their horses, their helms, and their shields, and their byrnies, and all their wargear; and their journey was furnished forth in the noblest wise, and no champion who was of the great men might abide at home; and their horses were clad in mail-coats, and every knight of them had his helm done over with gold or with silver.

Grimhild was of their company, for she said that their errand would never be brought fairly to pass if she sat at home.

They were well five hundred men, and noble men rode with them. There was Waldemar of Denmark, and Eymod and Jarisleif withal. So they went into the hall of King Alf, and there abode them the Longbeards, and Franks, and Saxons: they fared with all their war-gear, and had over them red fur-coats. Even as the song says: Gudrun wedded to Atli

Byrnies short cut,
Strong helms hammered,
Girt with good swords,
Red hair gleaming.

They were fain to choose good gifts for their sister, and spake softly to her, but in none of them would she trow. Then Gunnar brought unto her a drink mingled with hurtful things, and this she must needs drink, and with the drinking thereof she had no more memory of their guilt against her.

But in that drink was blended the might of the earth and the sea with the blood of her son; and in that horn were all letters cut and reddened with blood, as is said hereunder:

On the horn's face were there
All the kin of letters
Cut aright and reddened,
How should I rede them rightly?
The ling-fish long
Of the land of Hadding,
Wheat-ears unshorn,
And wild things' inwards.

In that beer were mingled
Many ills together,
Blood of all the wood
And brown-burnt acorns,
The black dew of the hearth,
The God-doomed dead beast's inwards,
And the swine's liver sodden
Because all wrongs that deadens.

Gudrun wedded to Atli

And so now, when their hearts are brought anigh to each other, great cheer they made: then came Grimhild to Gudrun, and spake:

"All hail to thee, daughter! I give thee gold and all kinds of good things to take to thee after thy father, dear-bought rings and bed-gear of the maids of the Huns, the most courteous and well dight of all women; and thus is thy husband atoned for: and thereafter shalt thou be given to Atli, the mighty king, and be mistress of all his might. Cast not all thy friends aside for one man's sake, but do according to our bidding."

Gudrun answers, "Never will I wed Atli the King: unseemly it is for us to get offspring betwixt us."

Grimhild says, "Nourish not thy wrath; it shall be to thee as if Sigurd and Sigmund were alive when thou hast borne sons."

Gudrun says, "I cannot take my heart from thoughts of him, for he was the first of all men."

Grimhild says, "So it is shapen that thou must have this king and none else."

Says Gudrun, "Give not this man to me, for an evil thing shall come upon thy kin from him, and to his own sons shall he deal evil, and be rewarded with a grim revenge thereafter."

Then waxed Grimhild fell at those words, and spake, "Do even as we bid thee, and take therefor great honour, and our friendship, and the steads withal called Vinbjorg and Valbjorg."

And such might was in the words of her, that even so must it come to pass.

Then Gudrun spake, "Thus then must it needs befall, howsoever against the will of me, and for little joy shall it be and for great grief."

Then men leaped on their horses, and their women were set in wains. So they fared four days a-riding and other four a-shipboard, and yet four more again by land and road, till at the last they came to a certain high-built hall; then came to meet Gudrun many folk thronging; and an exceedingly good

feast was there made, even as the word had gone between either kin, and it passed forth in most proud and stately wise. And at that feast drinks Atli his bridal with Gudrun; but never did her heart laugh on him, and little sweet and kind was their life together.

Gudrun wedded to Atli

CHAPTER XXXIV. ATLI BIDS THE GIUKINGS TO HIM.

NOW tells the tale that on a night King Atli woke from sleep and spake to Gudrun:

"Medreamed," said he, "that thou didst thrust me through with a sword."

Then Gudrun areded the dream, and said that it betokened fire, whenas folk dreamed of iron. "It befalls of thy pride belike, in that thou deemest thyself the first of men."

Atli said, "Moreover I dreamed that here waxed two sorb-tree saplings, and fain I was that they should have no scathe of me; then these were riven up by the roots and reddened with blood, and borne to the bench, and I was bidden eat thereof.

"Yea, yet again I dreamed that two hawks flew from my hand hungry and unfed, and fared to hell, and meseemed their hearts were mingled with honey, and that I ate thereof.

"And then again I dreamed that two fair whelps lay before me yelling aloud, and that the flesh of them I ate, though my will went not with the eating."

Gudrun says, "Nowise good are these dreams, yet shall they come to pass; surely thy sons are nigh to death, and many heavy things shall fall upon us."

"Yet again I dreamed," said he, "and methought I lay in a bath, and folk took counsel to slay me."

Now these things wear away with time, but in nowise was their life together fond.

Now falls Atli to thinking of where may be gotten that plenteous gold which Sigurd had owned, but King Gunnar and his brethren were lords thereof now.

Atli was a great king and mighty, wise and a lord of many

Atli bids the Giukings to him

men; and now he falls to counsel with his folk as to the ways of them. He wotted well that Gunnar and his brethren had more wealth than any others might have; and so he falls to the rede of sending men to them; and bidding them to a great feast, and honouring them in diverse wise, and the chief of those messengers was hight Vingi.

Now the queen wots of their conspiring, and misdoubts her that this would mean some beguiling of her brethren: so she cut runes, and took a gold ring, and knit therein a wolf's hair, and gave it into the hands of the king's messengers.

Thereafter they go their ways according to the king's bidding; and or ever they came aland Vingi beheld the runes, and turned them about in such a wise, as if Gudrun prayed her brethren in her runes to go meet King Atli.

Thereafter they came to the hall of King Gunnar, and had good welcome at his hands, and great fires were made for them, and in great joyance they drank of the best of drink.

Then spake Vingi, "King Atli sends me hither, and is fain that ye go to his house and home in all glory, and take of him exceeding honours, helms and shields, swords and byrnies, gold and goodly raiment, horses, hosts of war, and great and wide lands, for, saith he, he is fainest of all things to bestow his realm and lordship upon you."

Then Gunnar turned his head aside, and spoke to Hogni:

"In what wise shall we take this bidding? might and wealth he bids us take; but no kings know I who have so much gold as we have, whereas we have all the hoard which lay once on Gnita-heath; and great are our chambers, and full of gold, and weapons for smiting, and all kinds of raiment of war, and well I wot that amidst all men my horse is the best, and my sword the sharpest, and my gold the most glorious."

Hogni answers, "A marvel is it to me of his bidding, for seldom hath he done in such a wise, and ill-counselled will it be to wend to him; lo now, when I saw those dear-bought things the king sends us I wondered to behold a wolf's hair knit to a certain gold ring; belike Gudrun deems him to be

minded as a wolf towards us, and will have naught of our faring."

Atli bids the Giukings to him

But withal Vingi shows him the runes which he said Gudrun had sent.

Now the most of folk go to bed, but these drank on still with certain others; and Kostbera, the wife of Hogni, the fairest of women, came to them, and looked on the runes.

But the wife of Gunnar was Glaumvor, a great-hearted wife.

So these twain poured out, and the kings drank, and were exceeding drunken, and Vingi notes it, and says:

"Naught may I hide that King Atli is heavy of foot and over-old for the warding of his realm; but his sons are young and of no account: now will he give you rule over his realms while they are yet thus young, and most fain will he be tha. ye have the joy thereof before all others."

Now so it befell both that Gunnar was drunk, and that great dominion was held out to him, nor might he work against the fate shapen for him; so he gave his word to go, and tells Hogni his brother thereof.

But he answered, "Thy word given must even stand now, nor will I fail to follow thee, but most loth am I to this journey."

CHAPTER XXXV. THE DREAMS OF THE WIVES OF THE GIUKINGS.

SO when men had drunk their fill, they fared to sleep; then falls Kostbera to beholding the runes, and spelling over the letters, and sees that beneath were other things cut, and that the runes are guileful; yet because of her wisdom she had skill to read them aright. So then she goes to bed by her husband; but when they awoke, she spake unto Hogni:

"Thou art minded to wend away from home—ill counselled is that; abide till another time! Scarce a keen reader of runes art thou, if thou deemest thou hast beheld in them the bidding of thy sister to this journey: lo, I read the runes, and had mar-

Dreams of the Wives of the Giukings

vel of so wise a woman as Gudrun is, that she should have miscut them; but that which lieth underneath beareth your bane with it,—yea, either she lacked a letter, or others have dealt guilefully with the runes.

"And now hearken to my dream; for therein methought there fell in upon us here a river exceeding strong, and brake up the timbers of the hall."

He answered, "Full oft are ye evil of mind, ye women, but for me, I was not made in such wise as to meet men with evil who deserve no evil; belike he will give us good welcome."

She answered, "Well, the thing must ye yourselves prove, but no friendship follows this bidding:—but yet again I dreamed that another river fell in here with a great and grimly rush, and tore up the dais of the hall, and brake the legs of both you brethren; surely that betokeneth somewhat."

He answers, "Meadows along our way, whereas thou didst dream of the river; for when we go through the meadows, plentifully doth the seeds of the hay hang about our legs."

"Again I dreamed," she says, "that thy cloak was afire, and that the flame blazed up above the hall."

Says he, "Well, I wot what that shall betoken; here lieth my fair-dyed raiment, and it shall burn and blaze, whereas thou dreamedst of the cloak."

"Methought a bear came in," she says, "and brake up the king's high-seat, and shook his paws in such a wise that we were all adrad thereat, and he gat us all together into the mouth of him, so that we might avail us naught, and thereof fell great horror on us."

He answered, "Some great storm will befall, whereas thou hadst a white bear in thy mind."

"An erne methought came in," she says, "and swept adown the hall, and drenched me and all of us with blood, and ill shall that betoken, for methought it was the double of King Atli."

He answered, "Full oft do we slaughter beasts freely, and smite down great neat for our cheer, and the dream of the erne has but to do with oxen; yea, Atli is heart-whole toward us."

And therewithal they cease this talk.

CHAPTER XXXVI. OF THE JOURNEY OF THE GIUKINGS TO KING ATLI.

Journey of the Giukings to Atli

NOW tells the tale of Gunnar, that in the same wise it fared with him; for when they awoke, Glaumvor his wife told him many dreams which seemed to her like to betoken guile coming; but Gunnar areded them all in other wise.

"This was one of them," said she; "methought a bloody sword was borne into the hall here, wherewith thou wert thrust through, and at either end of that sword wolves howled."

The king answered, "Cur dogs shall bite me belike; blood-stained weapons oft betoken dogs' snappings."

She said, "Yet again I dreamed—that women came in, heavy and drooping, and chose thee for their mate; mayhappen these would be thy fateful women."

He answered, "Hard to arede is this, and none may set aside the fated measure of his days, nor is it unlike that my time is short."

So in the morning they arose, and were minded for the journey, but some letted them herein.

Then cried Gunnar to the man who is called Fjornir:

"Arise, and give us to drink goodly wine from great tuns, because mayhappen this shall be very last of all our feasts; for belike if we die the old wolf shall come by the gold, and that bear shall nowise spare the bite of his war-tusks."

Then all the folk of his household brought them on their way weeping.

The son of Hogni said:

"Fare ye well with merry tide."

The more part of their folk were left behind; Solar and Gnœvar, the sons of Hogni, fared with them, and a certain great champion, named Orkning, who was the brother of Kostbera.

So folk followed them down to the ships, and all letted them on their journey, but attained to naught therein.

Then spake Glaumvor and said:

"O Vingi, most like that great ill hap will come of thy

Journey of the Giukings to Atli

coming, and mighty and evil things shall betide in thy travelling."

He answered, "Hearken to my answer; that I lie not aught: and may the high gallows and all things of grame have me, if I lie one word!"

Then cried Kostbera, "Fare ye well with merry days."

And Hogni answered, "Be glad of heart, howsoever it may fare with us!"

And therewith they parted, each to their own fate. Then away they rowed, so hard and fast, that well-nigh the half of the keel slipped away from the ship, and so hard they laid on to the oars that thole and gunwale brake.

But when they came aland they made their ship fast, and then they rode awhile on their noble steeds through the murk wild-wood.

And now they behold the king's army, and huge uproar, and the clatter of weapons they hear from thence; and they see there a mighty host of men, and the manifold array of them, even as they wrought there: and all the gates of the burg were full of men.

So they rode up to the burg, and the gates thereof were shut; then Hogni brake open the gates, and therewith they ride into the burg.

Then spake Vingi, "Well might ye have left this deed undone; go to now, bide ye here while I go seek your gallows-tree! Softly and sweetly I bade you hither, but an evil thing abode thereunder; short while to bide ere ye are tied up to that same tree!"

Hogni answered, "None the more shall we waver for that cause; for little methinks have we shrunk aback whenas men fell to fight; and naught shall it avail thee to make us afeard,—and for an ill fate hast thou wrought."

And therewith they cast him down to earth, and smote him with their axe-hammers till he died.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE BATTLE IN THE BURG OF KING ATLI.

Battle in the Burg

THEN they rode into the king's hall, and King Atli arrayed his host for battle, and the ranks were so set forth that a certain wall there was betwixt them and the brethren.

"Welcome hither," said he. "Deliver unto me that plenteous gold which is mine of right; even the wealth which Sigurd once owned, and which is now Gudrun's of right."

Gunnar answered, "Never gettest thou that wealth; and men of might must thou meet here, or ever we lay by life if thou wilt deal with us in battle: ah, belike thou settest forth this feast like a great man, and wouldst not hold thine hand from erne and wolf!"

"Long ago I had it in my mind," said Atli, "to take the lives of you, and be lord of the gold, and reward you for that deed of shame, wherein ye beguiled the best of all your affinity; but now shall I revenge him."

Hogni answered, "Little will it avail to lie long brooding over that rede, leaving the work undone."

And therewith they fell to hard fighting, at the first brunt with shot.

But therewithal came the tidings to Gudrun, and when she heard thereof she grew exceeding wroth, and cast her mantle from her, and ran out and greeted those new-comers, and kissed her brethren, and showed them all love,—and the last of all greetings was that betwixt them.

Then said she, "I thought I had set forth counsels whereby ye should not come hither, but none may deal with his shapen fate." And withal she said, "Will it avail aught to seek for peace?"

But stoutly and grimly they said nay thereto. So she sees that the game goeth sorely against her brethren, and she gathers to her great stoutness of heart, and does on her a mail-coat and takes to her a sword, and fights by her brethren, and goes as far forward as the bravest of man-folk: and all spake in one wise that never saw any fairer defence than in her.

Battle in the Burg

Now the men fell thick, and far before all others was the fighting of those brethren, and the battle endured a long while unto midday; Gunnar and Hogni went right through the folk of Atli, and so tells the tale that all the mead ran red with blood; the sons of Hogni withal set on stoutly.

Then spake Atli the King, "A fair host and a great have we, and mighty champions withal, and yet have many of us fallen, and but evil am I apaid in that nineteen of my champions are slain, and but six left alive."

And therewithal was there a lull in the battle.

Then spake Atli the King, "Four brethren were we, and now am I left alone; great affinity I gat to me, and deemed my fortune well sped thereby; a wife I had, fair and wise, high of mind, and great of heart; but no joyance may I have of her wisdom, for little peace is betwixt us, but ye—ye have slain many of my kin, and beguiled me of realm and riches, and for the greatest of all woes have slain my sister withal."

Quoth Hogni, "Why babblest thou thus? thou wert the first to break the peace. Thou didst take my kinswoman and pine her to death by hunger, and didst murder her, and take her wealth; an ugly deed for a king!—meet for mocking and laughter I deem it, that thou must needs make long tale of thy woes; rather will I give thanks to the Gods that thou fallest into ill."

CHAPTER XXXVIII. OF THE SLAYING OF THE GIUKINGS.

NOW King Atli eggs on his folk to set on fiercely, and eagerly they fight; but the Giukings fell on so hard that King Atli gave back into the hall, and within doors was the fight, and fierce beyond all fights.

That battle was the death of many a man, but such was the ending thereof, that there fell all the folk of those brethren, and they twain alone stood up on their feet, and yet many more must fare to hell first before their weapons.

And now they fell on Gunnar the King, and because of the host of men that set on him was hand laid on him, and he was

cast into fetters; afterwards fought Hogni, with the stoutest heart and the greatest manlihood; and he felled to earth twenty of the stoutest of the champions of King Atli, and many he thrust into the fire that burnt amidst the hall, and all were of one accord that such a man might scarce be seen; yet in the end was he borne down by many and taken. Slaying of the Giukings

Then said King Atli, "A marvellous thing how many men have gone their ways before him! Cut the heart from out of him, and let that be his bane!"

Hogni said, "Do according to thy will; merrily will I abide whatso thou wilt do against me; and thou shalt see that my heart is not adrad, for hard matters have I made trial of ere now, and all things that may try a man was I fain to bear, whiles yet I was unhurt; but now sorely am I hurt, and thou alone henceforth wilt bear mastery in our dealings together."

Then spake a counsellor of King Atli, "Better rede I see thereto; take we the thrall Hjalli, and give respite to Hogni; for this thrall is made to die, since the longer he lives the less worth shall he be."

The thrall hearkened, and cried out aloft, and fled away anywhither where he might hope for shelter, crying out that a hard portion was his because of their strife and wild doings, and an ill day for him whereon he must be dragged to death from his sweet life and his swine-keeping. But they caught him, and turned a knife against him, and he yelled and screamed or ever he felt the point thereof.

Then in such wise spake Hogni as a man seldom speaketh who is fallen into hard need, for he prayed for the thrall's life, and said that these shrieks he could not away with, and that it were a lesser matter to him to play out the play to the end; and therewithal the thrall gat his life as for that time: but Gunnar and Hogni are both laid in fetters.

Then spake King Atli with Gunnar the King, and bade him tell out concerning the gold, and where it was, if he would have his life.

But he answered, "Nay, first will I behold the bloody heart of Hogni, my brother."

Slaying of the Giukings

So now they caught hold of the thrall again, and cut the heart from out of him, and bore it unto King Gunnar, but he said:

"The faint heart of Hjalli may ye here behold, little like the proud heart of Hogni, for as much as it trembleth now, more by the half it trembled whenas it lay in the breast of him."

So now they fell on Hogni even as Atli urged them, and cut the heart from out of him, but such was the might of his manhood, that he laughed while he abode that torment, and all wondered at his worth, and in perpetual memory is it held sithence.

Then they showed it to Gunnar, and he said:

"The mighty heart of Hogni, little like the faint heart of Hjalli, for little as it trembleth now, less it trembled whenas in his breast it lay! But now, O Atli, even as we die so shalt thou die; and lo, I alone wot where the gold is, nor shall Hogni be to tell thereof now; to and fro played the matter in my mind whiles we both lived, but now have I myself determined for myself, and the Rhine river shall rule over the gold, rather than that the Huns shall bear it on the hands of them."

Then said King Atli, "Have away the bondsman;" and so they did.

But Gudrun called to her men, and came to Atli, and said:

"May it fare ill with thee now and from henceforth, even as thou hast ill held to thy word with me!"

So Gunnar was cast into a worm-close, and many worms abode him there, and his hands were fast bound; but Gudrun sent him a harp, and in such wise did he set forth his craft, that wisely he smote the harp, smiting it with his toes, and so excellently well he played, that few deemed they had heard such playing, even when the hand had done it. And with such might and power he played, that all the worms fell asleep in the end, save one adder only, great and evil of aspect, that crept unto him and thrust its sting into him until it smote his heart; and in such wise with great hardihood he ended his life days.

CHAPTER XXXIX. THE END OF ATLI & HIS KIN AND FOLK.

The End of Atli

NOW thought Atli the King that he had gained a mighty victory, and spake to Gudrun even as mocking her greatly, or as making himself great before her. "Gudrun," saith he, "thus hast thou lost thy brethren, and thy very self hast brought it about."

She answers, "In good liking livest thou, whereas thou thrustest these slayings before me, but mayhappen thou wilt rue it, when thou hast tried what is to come hereafter; and of all I have, the longest-lived matter shall be the memory of thy cruel heart, nor shall it go well with thee whiles I live."

He answered and said, "Let there be peace betwixt us; I will atone for thy brethren with gold and dear-bought things, even as thy heart may wish."

She answers, "Hard for a long while have I been in our dealings together, and now I say, that while Hogni was yet alive thou mightest have brought it to pass; but now mayest thou never atone for my brethren in my heart; yet oft must we women be overborne by the might of you men; and now are all my kindred dead and gone, and thou alone art left to rule over me: wherefore now this is my counsel that we make a great feast, wherein I will hold the funeral of my brothers and of thy kindred withal."

In such wise did she make herself soft and kind in words, though far other things forsooth lay thereunder, but he hearkened to her gladly, and trusted in her words, whereas she made herself sweet of speech.

So Gudrun held the funeral feast for her brethren, and King Atli for his men, and exceeding proud and great was this feast.

But Gudrun forgat not her woe, but brooded over it, how she might work some mighty shame against the king; and at nightfall she took to her the sons of King Atli and her as they played about the floor; the younglings waxed heavy of cheer, and asked what she would with them.

"Ask me not," she said; "ye shall die, the twain of you!"

Then they answered, "Thou mayest do with thy children

The End of Atli

even as thou wilt, nor shall any hinder thee, but shame there is to thee in the doing of this deed."

Yet for all that she cut the throats of them.

Then the king asked where his sons were, and Gudrun answered, "I will tell thee, and gladden thine heart by the telling; lo now, thou didst make a great woe spring up for me in the slaying of my brethren; now hearken and hear my rede and my deed; thou hast lost thy sons, and their heads are become beakers on the board here, and thou thyself hast drunken the blood of them blended with wine; and their hearts I took and roasted them on a spit, and thou hast eaten thereof."

King Atli answered, "Grim art thou in that thou hast murdered thy sons, and given me their flesh to eat, and little space passes betwixt ill deed of thine and ill deed."

Gudrun said, "My heart is set on the doing to thee of as great shame as may be; never shall the measure of ill be full to such a king as thou art."

The king said, "Worser deeds hast thou done than men have to tell of, and great unwisdom is there in such fearful redes; most meet art thou to be burned on bale when thou hast first been smitten to death with stones, for in such wise wouldst thou have what thou hast gone a weary way to seek."

She answered, "Thine own death thou foretellest, but another death is fated for me."

And many other words they spake in their wrath.

Now Hogni had a son left alive, hight Niblung, and great wrath of heart he bare against King Atli; and he did Gudrun to wit that he would avenge his father. And she took his words well, and they fell to counsel together thereover, and she said it would be great goodhap if it might be brought about.

So on a night, when the king had drunken, he gat him to bed, and when he was laid asleep, thither to him came Gudrun and the son of Hogni.

Gudrun took a sword and thrust it through the breast of King Atli, and they both of them set their hands to the deed, both she and the son of Hogni.

Then Atli the King awoke with the wound, and cried out,

"No need of binding or salving here!—who art thou who hast done the deed?" The End of Atli

Gudrun says, "Somewhat have I, Gudrun, wrought therein, and somewhat withal the son of Hogni."

Atli said, "Ill it beseemed to thee to do this, though somewhat of wrong was between us; for thou wert wedded to me by the rede of thy kin, and dower paid I for thee; yea, thirty goodly knights, and seemly maidens, and many men besides; and yet wert thou not content, but if thou shouldest rule over the lands King Budli owned: and thy mother-in-law full oft thou lettest sit a-weeping."

Gudrun said, "Many false words hast thou spoken, and of naught I account them; oft, indeed, was I fell of mood, but much didst thou add thereto. Full oft in this thy house did frays befall, and kin fought kin, and friend fought friend, and made themselves big one against the other; better days had I whenas I abode with Sigurd, when we slew kings, and took their wealth to us, but gave peace to whomso would, and the great men laid themselves under our hands, and might we gave to him of them who would have it; then I lost him, and a little thing was it that I should bear a widow's name, but the greatest of griefs that I should come to thee—I who had aforetime the noblest of all kings, while for thee, thou never barest out of the battle aught but the worser lot."

King Atli answered, "Naught true are thy words, nor will this our speech better the lot of either of us, for all is fallen now to naught; but now do to me in seemly wise, and array my dead corpse in noble fashion."

"Yea, that will I," she says, "and let make for thee a goodly grave, and build for thee a worthy abiding-place of stone, and wrap thee in fair linen, and care for all that needful is."

So therewithal he died, and she did according to her word: and then they cast fire into the hall.

And when the folk and men of estate awoke amid that dread and trouble, naught would they abide the fire, but smote each the other down, and died in such wise; so there Atli the King, and all his folk, ended their life-days. But Gudrun had no

The End of Atli

will to live longer after this deed so wrought, but nevertheless her ending day was not yet come upon her.

Now the Volsungs and the Giukings, as folk tell in tale, have been the greatest-hearted and the mightiest of all men, as ye may well behold written in the songs of old time.

But now with the tidings just told were these troubles stayed.

CHAPTER XL. HOW GUDRUN CAST HERSELF INTO THE SEA, BUT WAS BROUGHT ASHORE AGAIN.

GUDRUN had a daughter by Sigurd hight Swanhild; she was the fairest of all women, eager-eyed as her father, so that few durst look under the brows of her; and as far did she excel other woman-kind as the sun excels the other lights of heaven.

But on a day went Gudrun down to the sea, and caught up stones in her arms, and went out into the sea, for she had will to end her life. But mighty billows drave her forth along the sea, and by means of their upholding was she borne along till she came at the last to the burg of King Jonakr, a mighty king, and lord of many folk. And he took Gudrun to wife, and their children were Hamdir, and Sorli, and Erp; and there was Swanhild nourished withal.

CHAPTER XLI. OF THE WEDDING AND SLAYING OF SWANHILD.

JORMUNREK was the name of a mighty king of those days, and his son was called Randver. Now this king called his son to talk with him, and said, "Thou shalt fare on an errand of mine to King Jonakr, with my counsellor Bikki, for with King Jonakr is nourished Swanhild, the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's-bane; and I know for sure that she is the fairest may dwelling under the sun of this world; her above all others would I have to my wife, and thou shalt go woo her for me."

Randver answered, "Meet and right, fair lord, that I should go on thine errands."

So the king set forth this journey in seemly wise, and they fare till they come to King Jonakr's abode, and behold Swanhild, and have many thoughts concerning the treasure of her goodliness. Wedding and Slaying of Swanhild

But on a day Randver called the king to talk with him, and said, "Jormunrek the King would fain be thy brother-in-law, for he has heard tell of Swanhild, and his desire it is to have her to wife, nor may it be shown that she may be given to any mightier man than he is one."

The king says, "This is an alliance of great honour, for a man of fame he is."

Gudrun says, "A wavering trust, the trust in luck that it change not!"

Yet because of the king's furthering, and all the matters that went herewith, is the wooing accomplished; and Swanhild went to the ship with a goodly company, and sat in the stern beside the king's son.

Then spake Bikki to Randver, "How good and right it were if thou thyself had to wife so lovely a woman rather than the old man there."

Good seemed that word to the heart of the king's son, and he spake to her with sweet words, and she to him in like wise.

So they came aland and go unto the king, and Bikki said unto him, "Meet and right it is, lord, that thou shouldst know what is befallen, though hard it be to tell of, for the tale must be concerning thy beguiling, whereas thy son has gotten to him the full love of Swanhild, nor is she other than his harlot; but thou, let not the deed be unavenged."

Now many an ill rede had he given the king or this, but of all his ill redes did this sting home the most; and still would the king hearken to all his evil redes; wherefore he, who might nowise still the wrath within him, cried out that Randver should be taken and tied up to the gallows-tree.

And as he was led to the gallows he took his hawk and plucked the feathers from off it, and bade show it to his father; and when the king saw it, then he said, "Now may folk behold that he deemeth my honour to be gone away from me,

Wedding and Slaying of Swanhild

even as the feathers of this hawk;" and therewith he bade deliver him from the gallows.

But in that while had Bikki wrought his will, and Randver was dead-slain.

And, moreover, Bikki spake, "Against none hast thou more wrongs to avenge thee of, than against Swanhild; let her die a shameful death."

"Yea," said the king, "we will do after thy counsel."

So she was bound in the gate of the burg, and horses were driven at her to tread her down; but when she opened her eyes wide, then the horses durst not trample her; so when Bikki beheld that, he bade draw a bag over the head of her; and they did so, and therewith she lost her life.

CHAPTER XLII. GUDRUN SENDS HER SONS TO AVENGE SWANHILD.

NOW Gudrun heard of the slaying of Swanhild, and spake to her sons, "Why sit ye here in peace amid merry words, whereas Jormunrek hath slain your sister, and trodden her under foot of horses in shameful wise? No heart ye have in you like to Gunnar or Hogni; verily they would have avenged their kinswoman!"

Hamdir answered, "Little didst thou praise Gunnar and Hogni, whereas they slew Sigurd, and thou wert reddened in the blood of him, and ill were thy brethren avenged by the slaying of thine own sons: yet not so ill a deed were it for us to slay King Jormunrek, and so hard thou pushest us on to this that we may naught abide thy hard words."

Gudrun went about laughing now, and gave them to drink from mighty beakers, and thereafter she got for them great byrnies and good, and all other weed of war.

Then spake Hamdir, "Lo now, this is our last parting, for thou shalt hear tidings of us, and drink one grave-ale over us and over Swanhild."

So therewith they went their ways.

But Gudrun went unto her bower, with heart swollen with sorrow, and spake:

"To three men was I wedded, and first to Sigurd Fafnir's-

bane, and he was bewrayed and slain, and of all griefs was that the greatest grief. Then was I given to King Atli, and so fell was my heart toward him that I slew in the fury of my grief his children and mine. Then gave I myself to the sea, but the billows thereof cast me out aland, and to this king then was I given; then gave I Swanhild away out of the land with mighty wealth; and lo my next greatest sorrow after Sigurd, for under horses' feet was she trodden and slain; but the grimmest and ugliest of woes was the casting of Gunnar into the Worm-close, and the hardest was the cutting of Hogni's heart from him. Gudrun avenges Swanhild

"Ah, better would it be if Sigurd came to meet me, and I went my ways with him, for here bideth now behind with me neither son nor daughter to comfort me. Oh, mindest thou not, Sigurd, the words we spoke when we went into one bed together, that thou wouldst come and look on me; yea, even from thine abiding-place among the dead?"

And thus had the words of her sorrow an end.

CHAPTER XLIII. THE LATTER END OF ALL THE KIN OF THE GIUKINGS.

NOW telleth the tale concerning the sons of Gudrun, that she had arrayed their war-raiment in such wise, that no steel would bite thereon; and she bade them play not with stones or other heavy matters, for that it would be to their scathe if they did so.

And now, as they went on their way, they met Erp, their brother, and asked him in what wise he would help them.

He answered, "Even as hand helps hand, or foot helps foot."

But that they deemed naught at all, and slew him there and then. Then they went their ways, nor was it long or ever Hamdir stumbled, and thrust down his hand to steady himself and spake therewith:

"Naught but a true thing spake Erp, for now should I have fallen, had not hand been to steady me."

A little after Sorli stumbled, but turned about on his feet, and so stood, and spake:

The End of the Giukings

"Yea now had I fallen, but that I steadied myself with both feet."

And they said they had done evilly with Erp their brother.

But on they fare till they come to the abode of King Jormunrek, and they went up to him and set on him forthwith, and Hamdir cut both hands from him and Sorli both feet. Then spake Hamdir:

"Off were the head if Erp were alive; our brother, whom we slew on the way, and found out our deed too late." Even as the song says:

Off were the head
If Erp were alive yet,
Our brother the bold,
Whom we slew by the way,
The well-famed in warfare.

Now in this must they turn away from the words of their mother, whereas they had to deal with stones. For now men fell on them, and they defended themselves in good and manly wise, and were the scathe of many a man, nor would iron bite on them.

But there came thereto a certain man, old of aspect and one-eyed, and he spake:

"No wise men are ye, whereas ye cannot bring these men to their end."

Then the king said, "Give us rede thereto, if thou canst."

He said, "Smite them to the death with stones."

In such wise was it done, for the stones flew thick and fast from every side, and that was the end of their life-days.

And now has come to an end the whole root and stem of the Giukings.

NOW MAY ALL EARLS
BE BETTERED IN MIND,
MAY THE GRIEF OF ALL MAIDENS
EVER BE MINISHED,
FOR THIS TALE OF TROUBLE
SO TOLD TO ITS ENDING.

CERTAIN SONGS FROM THE ELDER EDDA, WHICH DEAL WITH THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS

PART OF THE SECOND LAY OF HELGI HUNDING'S-BANE[1]

HELGI wedded Sigrun, and they begat sons together, but Helgi lived not to be old; for Dag,[2] the son of Hogni, sacrificed to Odin, praying that he might avenge his father. So Odin lent Dag his spear, and Dag met Helgi, his brother-in-law, at a place called Fetter-grove, and thrust him through with that spear, and there fell Helgi dead; but Dag rode to Sevafell, and told Sigrun of the news.

Loth am I, sister,
Of sorrow to tell thee,
For by hard need driven
Have I drawn on thee greeting;
This morning fell
In Fetter-grove
The king well deemed
The best in the wide world,
Yea, he who stood
On the necks of the strong.

SIGRUN
All oaths once sworn
Shall bite thee sore,
The oaths that to Helgi
Once thou swarest

[1] Only that part of the song is given which completes the episode of Helgi Hunding's-bane; the earlier part of the song differs little from the Saga.

[2] Hogni, the father of Dag and Sigrun, had been slain by Helgi in battle, and Helgi had given peace to, and taken oaths of Dag.

At the bright white
Water of Lightening,[1]
And at the cold rock
That the sea runneth over.

May the ship sweep not on
That should sweep at its swiftest,
Though the wind desired
Behind thee driveth!
May the horse never run
That should run at his most might
When from thy foe's face
Thou hast most need to flee!

May the sword never bite
That thou drawest from scabbard,
But and if round thine head
In wrath it singeth!

Then should meet price be paid
For Helgi's slaying
When a wolf thou wert
Out in the wild-wood,
Empty of good things,
Empty of gladness,
With no meat for thy mouth
But dead men's corpses!

DAG
With mad words thou ravest,
Thy wits are gone from thee,
When thou for thy brother
Such ill fate biddest;
Odin alone
Let all this bale loose,
Casting the strife-runes
'Twixt friends and kindred.

[1] One of the rivers of the under-world.

Rings of red gold
Will thy brother give thee,
And the stead of Vandil
And the lands of Vigdale;
Have half of the land
For thy sorrow's healing,
O ring-arrayed sweetling
For thee and thy sons!

SIGRUN
No more sit I happy
At Sevafell;
At day-dawn, at night
Naught love I my life
Till broad o'er the people
My lord's light breaketh;
Till his war-horse runneth
Beneath him hither,
Well wont to the gold bit—
Till my king I welcome.

In such wise did Helgi
Deal fear around
To all his foes
And all their friends
As when the goat runneth
Before the wolf's rage,
Filled with mad fear
Down from the fell.

As high above all lords
Did Helgi bear him
As the ash-tree's glory
From the thorn ariseth,
Or as the fawn
With the dew-fall sprinkled
Is far above

All other wild things,
As his horns go gleaming
'Gainst the very heavens.

A barrow was raised above Helgi, but when he came to Valhall, then Odin bade him be lord of all things there, even as he; so Helgi sang:

Now shalt thou, Hunding,
For the help of each man
Get ready the foot-bath,
And kindle the fire;
The hounds shalt thou bind
And give heed to the horses,
Give wash to the swine
Ere to sleep thou goest.

A bondmaid of Sigrun went in the evening-tide by Helgi's mound, and there she saw how Helgi rode toward it with a great company; then she sang:

It is vain things' beguiling
That methinks I behold,
Or the ending of all things,
As ye ride, O ye dead men,
Smiting with spurs
Your horses' sides?
Or may dead warriors
Wend their ways homeward?

THE DEAD
No vain things' beguiling
Is that thou beholdest,
Nor the ruin of all things;
Though thou lookest upon us,
Though we smite with spurs

Our horses' sides;
Rather dead warriors
May wend their ways homeward.

Then went the bondmaid home, and told Sigrun, and sang:

Go out, Sigrun
From Sevafell,
If thou listest to look on
The lord of thy people!
For the mound is uncovered,
Thither is Helgi come,
And his wounds are bleeding,
But the king thee biddeth
To come and stay
That stream of sorrow.

So Sigrun went into the mound to Helgi, and sang:

Now am I as fain
Of this fair meeting,
As are the hungry
Hawks of Odin,
When they wot of the slaying
Of the yet warm quarry,
Or bright with dew
See the day a-dawning.

Ah, I will kiss
My king laid lifeless,
Ere thou castest by
Thy blood-stained byrny.
O Helgi, thy hair
Is thick with death's rime,
With the dew of the dead
Is my love all dripping;

Dead-cold are the hands
Of the son of Hogni!
How for thee, O my king,
May I win healing?

HELGI
Thou alone, Sigrun
Of Sevafell,
Hast so done that Helgi
With grief's dew drippeth;
O clad in gold
Cruel tears thou weepest,
Bright May of the Southlands,
Or ever thou sleepest:
Each tear in blood falleth
On the breast of thy lord,
Cold-wet and bitter-sharp
Swollen with sorrow.

Ah, we shall drink
Dear draughts and lovely,
Though we have lost
Both life and lands;
Neither shall any
Sing song of sorrow,
Though in my breast
Be wounds wide to behold:
For now are brides
In the mound abiding;
Kings' daughters sit
By us departed.

Now Sigrun arrayed a bed in the mound, and sang:

Here, Helgi, for thee
A bed have I dight,
Kind without woe,

O kin of the Ylfings!
To thy bosom, O king,
Will I come and sleep soft,
As I was wont
When my lord was living.

HELGI
Now will I call
Naught not to be hoped for
Early or late
At Sevafell,
When thou in the arms
Of a dead man art laid,
White maiden of Hogni,
Here in the mound:
And thou yet quick,
O King's daughter!

Now needs must I ride
On the reddening ways;
My pale horse must tread
The highway aloft:
West must I go
To Windhelm's bridge
Ere the war-winning crowd
Hall-crower[1] waketh.

So Helgi rode his ways: and the others gat them gone home to the house. But the next night Sigrun bade the bondwoman have heed of the mound. So at nightfall, whenas Sigrun came to the mound, she sang:

Here now would he come,
If to come he were minded;
Sigmund's offspring
From the halls of Odin.

[1] Hall-crower, *Salgofnir:* lit. Hall-gaper, the cock of Valhall.

Second Lay of Helgi

O me the hope waneth
Of Helgi's coming;
For high on the ash-boughs
Are the ernes abiding,
And all folk drift
Toward the Thing of the dreamland.

THE BONDMAID

Be not foolish of heart,
And fare all alone
To the house of the dead,
O Hero's daughter!
For more strong and dreadful
In the night season
Are all dead warriors
Than in the daylight.

But a little while lived Sigrun, because of her sorrow and trouble. But in old time folk trowed that men should be born again, though their troth be now deemed but an old wife's doting. And so, as folk say, Helgi and Sigrun were born again, and at that tide was he called Helgi the Scathe of Hadding, and she Kara the daughter of Halfdan; and she was a Valkyria, even as is said in the Lay of Kara.

PART OF THE LAY OF SIGRDRIFA[1]

NOW this is my first counsel,
That thou with thy kin
Be guiltless, guileless ever,
Nor hasty of wrath,
Despite of wrong done—
Unto the dead good that doeth.

Lo the second counsel,
That oath thou swearest never,
But trusty oath and true:
Grim tormenting
Gripes troth-breakers;
Cursed wretch is the wolf of vows.

This is my third rede,
That thou at the Thing
Deal not with the fools of folk;
For unwise man
From mouth lets fall
Worser word than well he wotteth.

Yet hard it is
That holding of peace
When men shall deem thee dastard,
Or deem the lie said soothly;
But woeful is home-witness,
Unless right good thou gettest it.
Ah, on another day
Drive the life from out him,
And pay the liar back for his lying.

Now behold the fourth rede:
If ill witch thee bideth,
Woe-begetting by the way,
Good going further
Rather than guesting,
Though thick night be on thee.

[1] This continues the first part of the lay given in Chap. xx of the Saga; and is, in fact, the original verse of Chap. xxi.

Far-seeing eyes
Need all sons of men
Who wend in wrath to war;
For baleful women
Bide oft by the highway,
Swords and hearts to soften.

And now the fifth rede:
As fair as thou seest
Brides on the bench abiding,
Let not love's silver
Rule over thy sleeping;
Draw no woman to kind kissing!

For the sixth thing, I rede
When men sit a-drinking
Amid ale-words and ill-words,
Deal thou naught
With the drunken fight-staves,
For wine stealeth wit from many.

Brawling and drink
Have brought unto men
Sorrow sore oft enow;
Yea, bane unto some,
And to some weary bale;
Many are the griefs of mankind.

For the seventh, I rede thee,
If strife thou raisest
With a man right high of heart,
Better fight a-field
Than burn in the fire
Within thine hall fair to behold.

The eighth rede that I give thee:
Unto all ill look thou,
And hold thine heart from all beguiling;
Draw to thee no maiden,
No man's wife bewray thou,
Urge them not to unmeet pleasure.

This is the ninth counsel:
That thou have heed of dead folk
Whereso thou findest them a-field;
Be they sick-dead,
Be they sea-dead,
Or come to ending by war-weapons.

Let bath be made
For such men foredone,
Wash thou hands and feet thereof,
Comb their hair and dry them
Ere the coffin has them;
Then bid them sleep full sweetly.

This for the tenth counsel:
That thou give trust never
Unto oaths of foeman's kin,
Be'st thou bane of his brother,
Or hast thou felled his father;
Wolf in young son waxes,
Though he with gold be gladdened.

For wrong and hatred
Shall rest them never,
Nay, nor sore sorrow.
Both wit and weapons
Well must the king have
Who is fain to be the foremost.

The last rede and eleventh:
Unto all ill look thou,
And watch thy friends' ways ever.
Scarce durst I look
For long life for thee, king:
Strong trouble ariseth now already.

THE LAY CALLED THE SHORT LAY OF SIGURD

SIGURD of yore,
Sought the dwelling of Giuki,
As he fared, the young Volsung,
After fight won;
Troth he took
From the two brethren;
Oath swore they betwixt them,
Those bold ones of deed.

A may they gave to him
And wealth manifold,
Gudrun the young,
Giuki's daughter:
They drank and gave doom
Many days together,
Sigurd the young,
And the sons of Giuki.

Until they wended
For Brynhild's wooing,
Sigurd a-riding
Amidst their rout;
The wise young Volsung
Who knew of all ways—
Ah! he had wed her,
Had fate so willed it.

Southlander Sigurd
A naked sword,
Bright, well grinded,
Laid betwixt them;
No kiss he won
From the fair woman,
Nor in arms of his

Did the Hun King hold her,
Since he gat the young maid
For the son of Giuki.

No lack in her life
She wotted of now,
And at her death-day
No dreadful thing
For a shame indeed
Or a shame in seeming;
But about and betwixt
Went baleful fate.

Alone, abroad,
She sat of an evening,
Of full many things
She fell a-talking:
"O for my Sigurd!
I shall have death,
Or my fair, my lovely,
Laid in mine arms.

"For the word once spoken,
I sorrow sorely—
His queen is Gudrun,
I am wed to Gunnar;
The dread Norns wrought for us
A long while of woe."

Oft with heart deep
In dreadful thoughts,
O'er ice-fields and ice-hills
She fared a-night time,
When he and Gudrun
Were gone to their fair bed,
And Sigurd wrapped
The bed-gear round her.

"Ah! now the Hun King
His queen in arms holdeth,
While love I go lacking,
And all things longed for
With no delight
But in dreadful thought."

These dreadful things
Thrust her toward murder:
—"Listen, Gunnar,
For thou shalt loose
My wide lands,
Yea, me myself!
Never love I my life,
With thee for my lord—

"I will fare back thither
From whence I came,
To my nighest kin
And those that know me:
There shall I sit
Sleeping my life away,
Unless thou slayest
Sigurd the Hun King,
Making thy might more
E'en than his might was!

"Yea, let the son fare
After the father,
And no young wolf
A long while nourish!
For on each man lieth
Vengeance lighter,
And peace shall be surer
If the son live not."

Adrad was Gunnar,
Heavy-hearted was he,

And in doubtful mood
Day-long he sat.
For naught he wotted,
Nor might see clearly
What was the seemliest
Of deeds to set hand to;
What of all deeds
Was best to be done:
For he minded the vows
Sworn to the Volsung,
And the sore wrong
To be wrought against Sigurd.

Wavered his mind
A weary while,
No wont it was
Of those days worn by,
That queens should flee
From the realms of their kings.

"Brynhild to me
Is better than all,
The child of Budli
Is the best of women.
Yea, and my life
Will I lay down,
Ere I am twinned
From that woman's treasure."

He bade call Hogni
To the place where he bided;
With all the trust that might be,
Trowed he in him.

"Wilt thou bewray Sigurd
For his wealth's sake?
Good it is to rule
O'er the Rhine's metal;

And well content
Great wealth to wield,
Biding in peace
And blissful days."

One thing alone Hogni
Had for an answer:
"Such doings for us
Are naught seemly to do;
To rend with sword
Oaths once sworn,
Oaths once sworn,
And troth once plighted.

"Nor know we on mould,
Men of happier days,
The while we four
Rule over the folk;
While the bold in battle,
The Hun King, bides living.

"And no nobler kin
Shall be known afield,
If our five sons
We long may foster;
Yea, a goodly stem
Shall surely wax.
—But I clearly see
In what wise it standeth,
Brynhild's sore urging
O'ermuch on thee beareth."

"Guttorm shall we
Get for the slaying,
Our younger brother
Bare of wisdom;
For he was out of

All the oaths sworn,
All the oaths sworn,
And the plighted troth."

Easy to rouse him
Who of naught recketh!
—Deep stood the sword
In the heart of Sigurd.

There, in the hall,
Gat the high-hearted vengeance;
For he cast his sword
At the reckless slayer:
Out at Guttorm
Flew Gram the mighty,
The gleaming steel
From Sigurd's hand.

Down fell the slayer
Smitten asunder;
The heavy head
And the hands fell one way,
But the feet and such like
Aback where they stood.

Gudrun was sleeping
Soft in the bed,
Empty of sorrow
By the side of Sigurd:
When she awoke
With all pleasure gone,
Swimming in blood
Of Frey's beloved.

So sore her hands
She smote together,
That the great-hearted

Gat raised in bed;
—"O Gudrun, weep not
So woefully,
Sweet lovely bride,
For thy brethren live for thee!

"A young child have I
For heritor;
Too young to win forth
From the house of his foes.—
Black deeds and ill
Have they been a-doing,
Evil rede
Have they wrought at last.

"Late, late, rideth with them
Unto the Thing,
Such sister's son,
Though seven thou bear,—
—But well I wot
Which way all goeth;
Alone wrought Brynhild
This bale against us.

"That maiden loved me
Far before all men,
Yet wrong to Gunnar
I never wrought;
Brotherhood I heeded
And all bounden oaths,
That none should deem me
His queen's darling."

Weary sighed Gudrun,
As the king gat ending,
And so sore her hands
She smote together,

That the cups arow
Rang out therewith,
And the geese cried on high
That were in the homefield.

Then laughed Brynhild,
Budli's daughter,
Once, once only,
From out her heart;
When to her bed
Was borne the sound
Of the sore greeting
Of Giuki's daughter.

Then, quoth Gunnar,
The king, the hawk-bearer,
"Whereas thou laughest,
O hateful woman,
Glad on thy bed,
No good it betokeneth:
Why lackest thou else
Thy lovely hue?
Feeder of foul deeds,
Fey do I deem thee,

"Well worthy art thou
Before all women,
That thine eyes should see
Atli slain of us;
That thy brother's wounds
Thou shouldst see a-bleeding,
That his bloody hurts
Thine hands should bind."

"No man blameth thee, Gunnar,
Thou hast fulfilled death's measure
But naught Atli feareth

All thine ill will;
Life shall he lay down
Later than ye,
And still bear more might
Aloft than thy might.

"I shall tell thee, Gunnar,
Though well the tale thou knowest,
In what early days
Ye dealt abroad your wrong:
Young was I then,
Worn with no woe,
Good wealth I had
In the house of my brother!

"No mind had I
That a man should have me,
Or ever ye Giukings
Rode into our garth;
There ye sat on your steeds
Three kings of the people—
—Ah! that that faring
Had never befallen!

"Then spake Atli
To me apart,
And said that no wealth
He would give unto me,
Neither gold nor lands
If I would not be wedded;
Nay, and no part
Of the wealth apportioned,
Which in my first days
He gave me duly;
Which in my first days
He counted down.

"Wavered the mind
Within me then,
If to fight I should fall
And the felling of folk,
Bold in byrny
Because of my brother;
A deed of fame
Had that been to all folk,
But to many a man
Sorrow of mind.

"So I let all sink
Into peace at the last:
More grew I minded
For the mighty treasure,
The red-shining rings
Of Sigmund's son;
For no man's wealth else
Would I take unto me.

"For myself had I given
To that great king
Who sat amid gold
On the back of Grani;
Naught were his eyen
Like to your eyen,
Nor in any wise
Went his visage with yours;
Though ye might deem you
Due kings of men.

"One I loved,
One, and none other,
The gold-decked may
Had no doubtful mind;
Thereof shall Atli

Wot full surely,
When he getteth to know
I am gone to the dead.

"Far be it from me,
Feeble and wavering,
Ever to love
Another's love—
—Yet shall my woe
Be well avenged."

Up rose Gunnar,
The great men's leader,
And cast his arms
About the queen's neck;
And all went nigh
One after other,
With their whole hearts
Her heart to turn.

But then all these
From her neck she thrust,
Of her long journey
No man should let her.

Then called he Hogni
To have talk with him:
"Let all folk go
Forth into the hall,
Thine with mine—
—O need sore and mighty!—
To wot if we yet
My wife's parting may stay.
Till with time's wearing
Some hindrance wax."

One answer Hogni
Had for all:

"Nay, let hard need
Have rule thereover,
And no man let her
Of her long journey!
Never born again,
May she come back thence.

"Luckless she came
To the lap of her mother,
Born into the world
For utter woe,
To many a man
For heart-whole mourning."

Unpraised he turned
From the talk and the trouble,
To where the gem-field
Dealt out goodly treasure;
As she looked and beheld
All the wealth that she had,
And the hungry bondmaids,
And maids of the hall.

With no good in her heart
She donned her gold byrny,
Ere she thrust the sword-point
Through the midst of her body:
On the bolster's far side
Sank she adown,
And, smitten with sword,
Still bethought her of redes.

"Let all come forth
Who are fain the red gold,
Or things less worthy
To win from my hands:
To each one I give

A necklace gilt over,
Wrought hangings and bed-gear
And bright woven weed."

All they kept silence,
And thought what to speak,
Then all at once
Answer gave:

"Full enow are death-doomed,
Fain are we to live yet,
Maids of the hall,
All meet work winning."

From her wise heart at last
The linen-clad damsel,
The one of few years
Gave forth the word:
"I will that none driven
By hand or by word,
For our sake should lose
Well-loved life.

"Though on the bones of you
Surely shall burn,
Less dear treasure
At your departing,
Nor with Menia's Meal[1]
Shall ye come to see me."

"Sit thee down, Gunnar,
A word must I say to thee
Of the life's ruin
Of thy lightsome bride—
—Nor shall thy ship

[1] "Menia's Meal," periphrasis for gold.

Swim soft and sweetly
For all that I
Lay life adown.

"Sooner than ye might deem
Shall ye make peace with Gudrun,
For the wise woman
Shall lull in the young wife
The hard memory
Of her dead husband.

"There is a may born
Reared by her mother,
Whiter and brighter
Than is the bright day;
She shall be Swanhild,
She shall be Sunbeam.

"Thou shalt give Gudrun
Unto a great one,
Noble, well-praised
Of the world's folk;
Not with her goodwill,
Or love shalt thou give her;
Yet will Atli
Come to win her,
My very brother,
Born of Budli.

—"Ah! many a memory
Of how ye dealt with me,
How sorely, how evilly
Ye ever beguiled me,
How all pleasure left me
The while my life lasted!—

"Fain wilt thou be
Oddrun to win,
But thy good liking
Shall Atli let;
But in secret wise
Shall ye win together,
And she shall love thee
As I had loved thee,
If in such wise
Fate had willed it.

"But with all ill
Shall Atli sting thee,
Into the strait worm-close
Shall he cast thee.

"But no long space
Shall slip away
Ere Atli too
All life shall lose.
Yea, all his weal
With the life of his sons,
For a dreadful bed
Dights Gudrun for him,
From a heart sore laden,
With the sword's sharp edge.

"More seemly for Gudrun,
Your very sister,
In death to wend after
Her love first wed;
Had but good rede
To her been given,
Or if her heart
Had been like to my heart.

—"Faint my speech groweth—
But for our sake
Ne'er shall she lose
Her life beloved;
The sea shall have her,
High billows bear her
Forth unto Jonakr's
Fair land of his fathers.

"There shall she bear sons,
Stays of a heritage,
Stays of a heritage,
Jonakr's sons;
And Swanhild shall she
Send from the land,
That may born of her,
The may born of Sigurd.

"Her shall bite
The rede of Bikki,
Whereas for no good
Wins Jormunrek life;
And so is clean perished
All the kin of Sigurd,
Yea, and more greeting,
And more for Gudrun.

"And now one prayer
Yet pray I of thee—
The last word of mine
Here in the world—
So broad on the field
Be the burg of the dead
That fair space may be left
For us all to lie down,
All those that died
At Sigurd's death!

"Hang round that burg
Fair hangings and shields,
Web by Gauls woven,
And folk of the Gauls:
There burn the Hun King
Lying beside me.

"But on the other side
Burn by the Hun King
Those who served me
Strewn with treasure;
Two at the head,
And two at the feet,
Two hounds therewith,
And two hawks moreover:
Then is all dealt
With even dealing.

"Lay there amidst us
The ring-dight metal,
The sharp-edged steel,
That so lay erst;
When we both together
Into one bed went,
And were called by the name
Of man and wife.

"Never, then, belike
Shall clash behind him
Valhall's bright door
With rings bedight:
And if my fellowship
Followeth after,
In no wretched wise
Then shall we wend.

"For him shall follow
My five bondmaids,
My eight bondsmen,
No borel folk:
Yea, and my fosterer,
And my father's dower
That Budli of old days
Gave to his dear child.

"Much have I spoken,
More would I speak,
If the sword would give me
Space for speech;
But my words are waning,
My wounds are swelling—
Naught but truth have I told—
—And now make I ending."

THE HELL-RIDE OF BRYNHILD

AFTER the death of Brynhild were made two bales, one for Sigurd, and that was first burned; but Brynhild was burned on the other, and she was in a chariot hung about with goodly hangings.

And so folk say that Brynhild drave in her chariot down along the way to Hell, and passed by an abode where dwelt a certain giantess, and the giantess spake:

Nay, with my goodwill
Never goest thou
Through this stone-pillared
Stead of mine!
More seemly for thee
To sit sewing the cloth,
Than to go look on
The love of another.

What dost thou, going
From the land of the Gauls,
O restless head,
To this mine house?
Golden girl, hast thou not,
If thou listest to hearken,
In sweet wise from thy hands
The blood of men washen?

BRYNHILD
Nay, blame me naught,
Bride of the rock-hall,
Though I roved a warring
In the days that were;
The higher of us twain
Shall I ever be holden
When of our kind
Men make account.

THE GIANT-WOMAN
Thou, O Brynhild,
Budli's daughter,
Wert the worst ever born
Into the world:
For Giuki's children
Death hast thou gotten,
And turned to destruction
Their goodly dwelling.

BRYNHILD
I shall tell thee
True tale from my chariot,
O thou who naught wottest,
If thou listest to wot;
How for me they have gotten
Those heirs of Giuki,
A loveless life,
A life of lies.

Hild under helm,
The Hlymdale people,
E'en those who knew me,
Ever would call me.

The changeful shapes
Of us eight sisters,
The wise king bade
Under oak-tree to bear:
Of twelve winters was I,
If thou listest to wot,
When I sware to the young lord
Oaths of love.

Thereafter gat I
Mid the folk of the Goths,
For Helmgunnar the old,

Swift journey to Hell,
And gave to Aud's brother
The young, gain and glory;
Whereof overwrath
Waxed Odin with me.

So he shut me in shield-wall
In Skata grove,
Red shields and white
Close set around me;
And bade him alone
My slumber to break
Who in no land
Knew how to fear.

He set round my hall,
Toward the south quarter,
The Bane of all trees
Burning aloft;
And ruled that he only
Thereover should ride
Who should bring me the gold
O'er which Fafnir brooded.

Then upon Grani rode
The goodly gold-strewer
To where my fosterer
Ruled his fair dwelling.
He who alone there
Was deemed best of all,
The War-lord of the Danes,
Well worthy of men.

In peace did we sleep
Soft in one bed,
As though he had been
Naught but my brother:

There as we lay
Through eight nights wearing,
No hand in love
On each other we laid.

Yet thence blamed me Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter,
That I had slept
In the arms of Sigurd;
And then I wotted
As I fain had not wotted,
That they had bewrayed me
In my betrothals.

Ah! for unrest
All too long
Are men and women
Made alive!
Yet we twain together
Shall wear through the ages,
Sigurd and I.—
—Sink adown, O giant-wife!

. . . .

HOGNI SAID
What hath wrought Sigurd
Of any wrong-doing
That the life of the famed one
Thou art fain of taking?

GUNNAR SAID
To me has Sigurd
Sworn many oaths,
Sworn many oaths,
And sworn them lying,
And he bewrayed me
When it behoved him
Of all folk to his troth
To be the most trusty.

HOGNI SAID
Thee hath Brynhild
Unto all bale,
And all hate whetted,
And a work of sorrow;
For she grudges to Gudrun
All goodly life;
And to thee the bliss
Of her very body.

. . . .

Some the wolf roasted,
Some minced the worm,
Some unto Guttorm
Gave the wolf-meat,
Or ever they might
In their lust for murder
On the high king
Lay deadly hand.

Sigurd lay slain
On the south of the Rhine,
High from the fair tree
Croaked forth the raven,
"Ah, yet shall Atli
On you redden edges,
The old oaths shall weigh
On your souls, O warriors."

Without stood Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter,
And the first word she said
Was even this word:
"Where then is Sigurd,
Lord of the Warfolk,
Since my kin
Come riding the foremost?"

One word Hogni
Had for an answer:
"Our swords have smitten
Sigurd asunder,
And the grey horse hangs drooping
O'er his lord lying dead."

Then quoth Brynhild,
Budli's daughter:
"Good weal shall ye have
Of weapons and lands,
That Sigurd alone
Would surely have ruled
If he had lived
But a little longer.

"Ah, nothing seemly
For Sigurd to rule
Giuki's house

And the folk of the Goths,
When of him five sons
For the slaying of men,
Eager for battle
Should have been begotten!"

Then laughed Brynhild—
Loud rang the whole house—
One laugh only
From out her heart:
"Long shall your bliss be
Of lands and people,
Whereas the famed lord
You have felled to the earth!"

Then spake Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter:
"Much thou speakest,
Many things fearful,
All grame be on Gunnar
The bane of Sigurd!
From a heart full of hate
Shall come heavy vengeance."

Forth sped the even,
Enow there was drunken,
Full enow was there
Of all soft speech;
And all men got sleep
When to bed they were gotten;
Gunnar only lay waking
Long after all men.

His feet fell he to moving,
Fell to speak to himself,
The waster of men
Still turned in his mind

What on the bough
Those twain would be saying,
The raven and erne,
As they rode their ways homeward.

But Brynhild awoke,
Budli's daughter,
May of the shield-folk,
A little ere morning:
"Thrust ye on, hold ye back,
—Now all harm is wrought,—
To tell of my sorrow,
Or to let all slip by me?"

All kept silence
After her speaking,
None might know
That woman's mind,
Or why she must weep
To tell of the work
That laughing once
Of men she prayed.

BRYNHILD SPAKE
In dreams, O Gunnar,
Grim things fell on me;
Dead-cold the hall was,
And my bed was a-cold,
And thou, lord, wert riding
Reft of all bliss,
Laden with fetters
'Mid the host of thy foemen.

So now all ye,
O House of the Niblungs,
Shall be brought to nought,
O ye oath-breakers!

Think'st thou not, Gunnar,
How that betid,
When ye let the blood run
Both in one footstep?
With ill reward
Hast thou rewarded
His heart so fain
To be the foremost!

As well was seen
When he rode his ways,
That king of all worth,
Unto my wooing;
How the host destroyer
Held to the vows
Sworn aforetime,
Sworn to the young king,

For his wounding-wand
All wrought with gold,
The king beloved
Laid between us;
Without were its edges
Wrought with fire,
But with venom-drops
Deep dyed within.

Thus this song telleth of the death of Sigurd, and setteth forth how that they slew him without doors; but some say that they slew him within doors, sleeping in his bed. But the Dutch Folk say that they slew him out in the wood: and so sayeth the ancient song of Gudrun, that Sigurd and the sons of Giuki were riding to the Thing whenas he was slain. But all with one accord say that they bewrayed him in their troth with him, and fell on him as he lay unarrayed and unawares.

THE SECOND OR ANCIENT LAY OF GUDRUN

THIODREK the King was in Atli's house, and had lost there the more part of his men: so there Thiodrek and Gudrun bewailed their troubles one to the other, and she spake and said:

A may of all mays
My mother reared me
Bright in bower;
Well loved I my brethren,
Until that Giuki
With gold arrayed me,
With gold arrayed me,
And gave me to Sigurd.

Such was my Sigurd,
Among the sons of Giuki
As is the green leek
O'er the low grass waxen,
Or a hart high-limbed
Over hurrying deer,
Or gleed-red gold
Over grey silver.

Till me they begrudged,
Those my brethren,
The fate to have him,
Who was first of all men;
Nor might they sleep,
Nor sit a-dooming,
Ere they let slay
My well-loved Sigurd.

Grani ran to the Thing,
There was clatter to hear,
But never came Sigurd

Himself thereunto;
All the saddle-girt beasts
With blood were besprinkled,
As faint with the way
Neath the slayers they went.

Then greeting I went
With Grani to talk,
And with tear-furrowed cheeks
I bade him tell all;
But drooping laid Grani
His head in the grass,
For the steed well wotted
Of his master's slaying.

A long while I wandered,
Long my mind wavered,
Ere the kings I might ask
Concerning my king.

Then Gunnar hung head,
But Hogni told
Of the cruel slaying
Of my Sigurd:
"On the water's far side
Lies, smitten to death,
The bane of Guttorm
To the wolves given over.

"Go, look on Sigurd,
On the ways that go southward,
There shalt thou hear
The ernes high screaming,
The ravens a-croaking
As their meat they crave for;
Thou shalt hear the wolves howling
Over thine husband."

"How hast thou, Hogni,
The heart to tell me,
Me of joy made empty,
Of such misery?
Thy wretched heart
May the ravens tear
Wide over the world,
With no men mayst thou wend!"

One thing Hogni
Had for answer,
Fallen from his high heart,
Full of all trouble:
"More greeting yet,
O Gudrun, for thee,
If my heart the ravens
Should rend asunder!"

Thence I turned
From the talk and the trouble
To go a leasing[1]
What the wolves had left me;
No sigh I made
Nor smote hands together,
Nor did I wail
As other women
When I sat over
My Sigurd slain.

Night methought it,
And the moonless dark,
When I sat in sorrow
Over Sigurd:
Better than all things
I deemed it would be
If they would let me

[1] The original has "a við lesa." "Leasing" is the word still used for gleaning in many country sides in England.

Cast my life by,
Or burn me up
As they burn the birch-wood.

From the fell I wandered
Five days together,
Until the high hall
Of Half lay before me;
Seven seasons there
I sat with Thora,
The daughter of Hacon,
Up in Denmark.

My heart to gladden
With gold she wrought
Southland halls
And swans of the Dane-folk;
There had we painted
The chiefs a-playing;
Fair our hands wrought
Folk of the kings.

Red shields we did,
Doughty knights of the Huns,
Hosts spear-dight, hosts helm-dight,
All a high king's fellows;
And the ships of Sigmund
From the land swift sailing;
Heads gilt over
And prows fair graven.

On the cloth we broidered
That tide of their battling,
Siggeir and Siggar,
South in Fion.

Then heard Grimhild,
The Queen of Gothland,
How I was abiding,
Weighed down with woe;

And she thrust the cloth from her
And called to her sons,
And oft and eagerly
Asked them thereof,
Who for her son
Would their sister atone,
Who for her lord slain
Would lay down weregild.

Fain was Gunnar
Gold to lay down
All wrongs to atone for,
And Hogni in likewise;
Then she asked who was fain
Of faring straightly,
The steed to saddle
To set forth the wain,
The horse to back,
And the hawk to fly,
To shoot forth the arrow
From out the yew-bow.

Valdarr the Dane-king
Came with Jarisleif;
Eymod the third went;
Then went Jarizskar;
In kingly wise
In they wended,
The host of the Longbeards;
Red cloaks had they,
Byrnies short-cut,
Helms strong hammered,
Girt with glaives,
And hair red-gleaming.

Each would give me
Gifts desired,
Gifts desired,
Speech dear to my heart,

If they might yet,
Despite my sorrow,
Win back my trust,
But in them naught I trusted.

Then brought me Grimhild
A beaker to drink of,
Cold and bitter,
Wrong's memory to quench;
Made great was that drink
With the might of the earth,
With the death-cold sea
And the blood that Son[1] holdeth.

On that horn's face were there
All the kin of letters
Cut aright and reddened,
How should I rede them rightly?
The ling-fish long
Of the land of Hadding,
Wheat-ears unshorn,
And wild things' inwards.

In that mead were mingled
Many ills together,
Blood of all the wood,
And brown-burnt acorns;
The black dew of the hearth,[2]
And god-doomed dead beasts' inwards,
And the swine's liver sodden,
For wrongs late done that deadens.

Then waned my memory
When that was within me,

[1] Son was the vessel into which was poured the blood of Quasir, the God of Poetry.

[2] This means soot.

Of my lord 'mid the hall
By the iron laid low.
Three kings came
Before my knees
Ere she herself
Fell to speech with me.

"I will give to thee, Gudrun,
Gold to be glad with,
All the great wealth
Of thy father gone from us,
Rings of red gold
And the great hall of Lodver,
And all fair hangings left
By the king late fallen.

"Maids of the Huns
Woven pictures to make,
And work fair in gold
Till thou deem'st thyself glad;
Alone shalt thou rule
O'er the riches of Budli
Shalt be made great with gold,
And be given to Atli."

"Never will I
Wend to a husband,
Or wed the brother
Of Queen Brynhild;
Naught it beseems me
With the son of Budli
Kin to bring forth,
Or to live and be merry."

"Nay, the high chiefs
Reward not with hatred,
For take heed that I

Was the first in this tale!
To thy heart shall it be
As if both these had life,
Sigurd and Sigmund,
When thou hast borne sons."

"Naught may I, Grimhild,
Seek after gladness,
Nor deem aught hopeful
Of any high warrior,
Since wolf and raven
Were friends together,
The greedy, the cruel,
O'er great Sigurd's heart-blood."

"Of all men that can be
For the noblest of kin
This king have I found,
And the foremost of all;
Him shalt thou have
Till with eld thou art heavy—
Be thou ever unwed,
If thou wilt naught of him!"

"Nay, nay, bid me not
With thy words long abiding
To take unto me
That balefullest kin;
This king shall bid Gunnar
Be stung to his bane,
And shall cut the heart
From out of Hogni.

"Nor shall I leave life
Ere the keen lord,
The eager in sword-play,
My hand shall make end of."

Grimhild a-weeping
Took up the word then,
When the sore bale she wotted
Awaiting her sons,
And the bane hanging over
Her offspring beloved.

"I will give thee, moreover,
Great lands, many men,
Wineberg and Valberg,
If thou wilt but have them;
Hold them lifelong,
And live happy, O daughter!"

"Then him must I take
From among kingly men,
'Gainst my heart's desire,
From the hands of my kinsfolk;
But no joy I look
To have from that lord:
Scarce may my brothers' bane
Be a shield to my sons."

Soon was each warrior
Seen on his horse,
But the Gaulish women
Into wains were gotten;
Then seven days long
O'er a cold land we rode,
And for seven other
Clove we the sea-waves.
But with the third seven
O'er dry land we wended.

There the gate-wardens
Of the burg high and wide,
Unlocked the barriers

Ere the burg-garth we rode to—
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Atli woke me
When meseemed I was
Full evil of heart
For my kin dead slain.

"In such wise did the Norns
Wake me or now"—
Fain was he to know
Of this ill foreshowing—
"That methought, O Gudrun
Giuki's daughter,
That thou setst in my heart
A sword wrought for guile."

"For fire's tokening I deem it
That dreaming of iron,
But for pride and for lust
The wrath of fair women.
Against some bale
Belike, I shall burn thee
For thy solace and healing
Though hateful thou art."

"In the fair garth methought
Had saplings fallen,
E'en such as I would
Should have waxen ever;
Uprooted were these,
And reddened with blood,
And borne to the bench,
And folk bade me eat of them.

"Methought from my hand then
Went hawks a-flying
Lacking their meat
To the land of all ill;
Methought that their hearts
Mingled with honey,
Swollen with blood,
I ate amid sorrow.

"Lo, next two whelps
From my hands I loosened,
Joyless were both,
And both a-howling;
And now their flesh
Became naught but corpses,
Whereof must I eat
But sore against my will."

"O'er the prey of the fishers
Will folk give doom;
From the bright white fish
The heads will they take;
Within a few nights,
Fey as they are,
A little ere day
Of that draught will they eat."

Ne'er since lay I down,
Ne'er since would I sleep,
Hard of heart, in my bed:—
That deed have I to do.[1]

[1] The whole of this latter part is fragmentary and obscure; there seems wanting to two of the dreams some trivial interpretation by Gudrun, like those given by Hogni to Kostbera in the Saga, of which nature, of course, the interpretation contained in the last stanza but one is, as we have rendered it: another rendering, from the different reading of the earlier edition of Edda (Stockholm, 1818) would make this refer much more directly to the slaying of her sons by Gudrun.

THE SONG OF ATLI

GUDRUN, Giuki's daughter, avenged her brethren, as is told far and wide: first she slew the sons of Atli, and then Atli himself; and she burned the hall thereafter, and all the household with it: and about these matters is this song made:

In days long gone
Sent Atli to Gunnar
A crafty one riding,
Knefrud men called him;
To Giuki's garth came he,
To the hall of Gunnar,
To the benches gay-dight,
And the gladsome drinking.

There drank the great folk
'Mid the guileful one's silence,
Drank wine in their fair hall:
The Huns' wrath they feared,
When Knefrud cried
In his cold voice,
As he sat on the high seat,
That man of the Southland:

"Atli has sent me
Riding swift on his errands
On the bit-griping steed
Through dark woodways unbeaten,
To bid thee, King Gunnar,
Come to his fair bench
With helm well-adorned,
To the home of King Atli.

"Shields shall ye have there
And spears ashen-shafted,
Helms ruddy with gold,
And hosts of the Huns;

Saddle-gear silver-gilt,
Shirts red as blood,
The hedge of the warwife,
And horses bit-griping.

"And he saith he will give you
Gnitaheath widespread,
And whistling spears
And prows well-gilded,
Mighty wealth
With the stead of Danpi,
And that noble wood
Men name the Murkwood."

Then Gunnar turned head
And spake unto Hogni:
"What rede from thee, high one,
Since such things we hear?
No gold know I
On Gnitaheath,
That we for our parts
Have not portion as great.

"Seven halls we have
Fulfilled of swords,
And hilts of gold
Each sword there has;
My horse is the best,
My blade is the keenest;
Fair my bow o'er the bench is,
Gleams my byrny with gold;
Brightest helm, brightest shield,
From Kiar's dwelling e'er brought—
Better all things I have
Than all things of the Huns."

HOGNI SAID
"What mind has our sister
That a ring she hath sent us

In weed of wolves clad?
Bids she not to be wary?
For a wolf's hair I found
The fair ring wreathed about;
Wolf beset shall the way be
If we wend on this errand."

No sons whetted Gunnar,
Nor none of his kin,
Nor learned men nor wise men,
Nor such as were mighty.
Then spake Gunnar
E'en as a king should speak,
Glorious in mead-hall
From great heart and high:

"Rise up now, Fiornir,
Forth down the benches
Let the gold cups of great ones
Pass in hands of my good-men!
Well shall we drink wine,
Draughts dear to our hearts,
Though the last of all feasts
In our fair house this be!

"For the wolves shall rule
O'er the wealth of the Niblungs,
With the pine-woods' wardens
If Gunnar perish:
And the black-felled bears
With fierce teeth shall bite
For the glee of the dog-kind,
If again comes not Gunnar."

Then good men never shamed,
Greeting aloud,
Led the great king of men

From the garth of his home;
And cried the fair son
Of Hogni the King:
"Fare happy, O Lords,
Whereso your hearts lead you!"

Then the bold knights
Let their bit-griping steeds
Wend swift o'er the fells,
Tread the murk-wood unknown,
All the Hun wood was shaking
As the hardy ones fared there;
O'er the green meads they urged
Their steeds shy of the goad.

Then Atli's land saw they;
Great towers and strong,
And the bold men of Bikki,
Aloft on the burg:
The Southland folks' hall
Set with benches about,
Dight with bucklers well bounden,
And bright white shining shields.

There drank Atli,
The awful Hun king,
Wine in his fair hall;
Without were the warders,
Gunnar's folk to have heed of,
Lest they had fared thither
With the whistling spear
War to wake 'gainst the king.

But first came their sister
As they came to the hall,
Both her brethren she met,

With beer little gladdened:
"Bewrayed art thou, Gunnar!
What dost thou, great king
To deal war to the Huns?
Go thou swift from the hall!

"Better, brother, hadst thou
Fared here in thy byrny
Than with helm gaily dight
Looked on Atli's great house:
Thou hadst sat then in saddle
Through days bright with the sun,
Fight to awaken
And fair fields to redden:

"O'er the folk fate makes pale
Should the Norns' tears have fallen,
The shield-mays of the Huns
Should have known of all sorrow;
And King Atli himself
To worm-close should be brought;
But now is the worm-close
Kept but for thee."

Then spake Gunnar
Great 'mid the people:
"Over-late, sister,
The Niblungs to summon;
A long way to seek
The helping of warriors,
The high lords unshamed,
From the hills of the Rhine!"

. . . .
. . . .

Seven Hogni beat down
With his sword sharp-grinded,

And the eighth man he thrust
Amidst of the fire.
Ever so shall famed warrior
Fight with his foemen,
As Hogni fought
For the hand of Gunnar.

But on Gunnar they fell,
And set him in fetters,
And bound hard and fast
That friend of Burgundians;
Then the warrior they asked
If he would buy life,
Buy life with gold
That king of the Goths.

Nobly spake Gunnar,
Great lord of the Niblungs;
"Hogni's bleeding heart first
Shall lie in mine hand,
Cut from the breast
Of the bold-riding lord,
With bitter-sharp knife
From the son of the king."

With guile the great one
Would they beguile,
On the wailing thrall
Laid they hand unwares,
And cut the heart
From out of Hjalli,
Laid it bleeding on trencher
And bare it to Gunnar.

"Here have I the heart
Of Hjalli the trembler,
Little like the heart

Of Hogni the hardy:
As much as it trembleth
Laid on the trencher,
By the half more it trembled
In the breast of him hidden."

Then laughed Hogni
When they cut the heart from him,
From the crest-smith yet quick,
Little thought he to quail.
The hard acorn of thought
From the high king they took,
Laid it bleeding on trencher
And bare it Gunnar.

"Here have I the heart
Of Hogni the hardy,
Little like to the heart
Of Hjalli the trembler.
Howso little it quaketh
Laid here on the dish,
Yet far less it quaked
In the breast of him laid.

"So far mayst thou bide
From men's eyen, O Atli,
As from that treasure
Thou shalt abide!

"Behold in my heart
Is hidden for ever
That hoard of the Niblungs,
Now Hogni is dead.
Doubt drew me two ways
While the twain of us lived,
But all that is gone,
Now I live on alone.

"The great Rhine shall rule
O'er the hate-raising treasure,

That gold of the Niblungs,
The seed of the Gods:
In the weltering water
Shall that wealth lie a-gleaming,
Or it shine on the hands
Of the children of Huns!"

Then cried Atli,
King of the Hun-folk,
"Drive forth your wains now
The slave is fast bounden."
And straightly thence
The bit-shaking steeds
Drew the hoard-warden,
The war-god to his death.

Atli the great king,
Rode upon Glaum,
With shields set round about,
And sharp thorns of battle:
Gudrun, bound by wedlock
To these, victory made gods of,
Held back her tears
As the hall she ran into.

"Let it fare with thee, Atli,
E'en after thine oaths sworn
To Gunnar full often;
Yea, oaths sworn of old time,
By the sun sloping southward,
By the high burg of Sigty,
By the fair bed of rest,
By the red ring of Ull!"

Now a host of men
Cast the high king alive
Into a close
Crept o'er within
With most foul worms,
Fulfilled of all venom,

Ready grave to dig
In his doughty heart.

Wrathful-hearted he smote
The harp with his hand,
Gunnar laid there alone;
And loud rang the strings.—
In such wise ever
Should hardy ring-scatterer
Keep gold from all folk
In the garth of his foemen.

Then Atli would wend
About his wide land,
On his steel brazen-shod,
Back from the murder.
Din there was in the garth,
All thronged with the horses;
High the weapon-song rose
From men come from the heath.

Out then went Gudrun,
'Gainst Atli returning,
With a cup gilded over,
To greet the land's ruler;
"Come, then, and take it,
King glad in thine hall,
From Gudrun's hands,
For the hell-farers groan not!"

Clashed the beakers of Atli,
Wine-laden on bench,
As in hall there a-gathered,
The Huns fell a-talking,
And the long-bearded eager ones
Entered therein,
From a murk den new-come,
From the murder of Gunnar.

Then hastened the sweet-faced
Delight of the shield-folk,
Bright in the fair hall,
Wine to bear to them:
The dreadful woman
Gave dainties withal
To the lords pale with fate,
Laid strange word upon Atli:

"The hearts of thy sons
Hast thou eaten, sword-dealer,
All bloody with death
And drenched with honey:
In most heavy mood
Brood o'er venison of men!
Drink rich draughts therewith,
Down the high benches send it!

"Never callest thou now
From henceforth to thy knee
Fair Erp or fair Eitil,
Bright-faced with the drink;
Never seest thou them now
Amidmost the seat,
Scattering the gold,
Or shafting of spears;
Manes trimming duly,
Or driving steeds forth!"

Din arose from the benches,
Dread song of men was there,
Noise 'mid the fair hangings,
As all Hun's children wept;
All saving Gudrun,
Who never gat greeting,
For her brethren bear-hardy,
For her sweet sons and bright,

The young ones, the simple
Once gotten with Atli.

. . . .
. . . .
. . . .

The seed of gold
Sowed the swan-bright woman,
Rings of red gold
She gave to the house-carls;
Fate let she wax,
Let the bright gold flow forth,
In naught spared that woman
The store-houses' wealth.

Atli unware
Was a-weary with drink;
No weapon had he,
No heeding of Gudrun—
Ah, the play would be better,
When in soft wise they twain
Would full often embrace
Before the great lords!

To the bed with sword-point
Blood gave she to drink
With a hand fain of death.
And she let the dogs loose:
Then in from the hall-door—
—Up waked the house-carls—
Hot brands she cast,
Gat revenge for her brethren.

To the flame gave she all
Who therein might be found;
Fell adown the old timbers,
Reeked all treasure-houses;

There the shield-mays were burnt,
Their lives' span brought to naught;
In the fierce fire sank down
All the stead of the Budlungs.

Wide told of is this—
Ne'er sithence in the world,
Thus fared bride clad in byrny
For her brothers' avenging;
For behold, this fair woman
To three kings of the people
Hath brought very death
Or ever she died!

THE WHETTING OF GUDRUN

GUDRUN went down unto the sea whenas she had slain Atli, and she cast herself therein, for she was fain to end her life: but nowise might she drown. She drave over the firths to the land of King Jonakr, and he wedded her, and their sons were Sorli, and Erp, and Hamdir, and there was Swanhild, Sigurd's daughter, nourished: and she was given to Jormunrek the Mighty. Now Bikki was a man of his, and gave such counsel to Randver, the king's son, as that he should take her; and with that counsel were the young folk well content.

Then Bikki told the king, and the king let hang Randver, but bade Swanhild be trodden under horses' feet. But when Gudrun heard thereof, she spake to her sons:

Words of strife heard I,
Huger than any,
Woeful words spoken,
Sprung from all sorrow,
When Gudrun fierce-hearted
With the grimmest of words
Whetted her sons
Unto the slaying.

"Why are ye sitting here?
Why sleep ye life away?
Why doth it grieve you nought
Glad words to speak,
Now when your sister—
Young of years was she—
Has Jormunrek trodden
With the treading of horses?—

"Black horses and white
In the highway of warriors:
Grey horses that know
The roads of the Goths.—

"Little like are ye grown
To that Gunnar of old days!
Naught are your hearts
As the heart of Hogni!
Well would ye seek
Vengeance to win
If your mood were in aught
As the mood of my brethren,
Or the hardy hearts
Of the Kings of the Huns!"

Then spake Hamdir,
The high-hearted:
"Little didst thou
Praise Hogni's doings,
When Sigurd woke
From out of sleep,
And the blue-white bed-gear
Upon thy bed
Grew red with man's blood—
With the blood of thy mate!

"Too baleful vengeance
Wroughtest thou for thy brethren,
Most sore and evil
When thy sons thou slewedst,
Else all we together
On Jormunrek
Had wrought sore vengeance
For that our sister.

"Come, bring forth quickly
The Hun kings' bright gear,
Since thou hast urged us
Unto the sword-Thing!"

Laughing went Gudrun
To the bower of good gear,
Kings' crested helms

From chests she drew,
And wide-wrought byrnies
Bore to her sons:
Then on their horses
Load laid the heroes.

Then spake Hamdir,
The high-hearted:
"Never cometh again
His mother to see
The spear-god laid low
In the land of the Goths.
That one arvel mayst thou
For all of us drink,
For sister Swanhild,
And us thy sons."

Greeted Gudrun,
Giuki's daughter;
Sorrowing she went
In the forecourt to sit,
That she might tell,
With cheeks tear-furrowed,
Her weary wail
In many a wise.

"Three fires I knew,
Three hearths I knew,
To three husbands' houses
Have I been carried;
And better than all
Had been Sigurd alone,
He whom my brethren
Brought to his bane.

"Such sore grief as that
Methought never should be,
Yet more indeed

Was left for my torment
Then, when the great ones
Gave me to Atli.

"My fair bright boys
I bade unto speech,
Nor yet might I win
Weregild for my bale,
Ere I had hewn off
Those Niblungs' heads.

"To the sea-strand I went
With the Norns sorely wroth,
For I would thrust from me
The storm of their torment;
But the high billows
Would not drown, but bore me
Forth, till I stepped a-land
Longer to live.

"Then I went a-bed—
—Ah, better in the old days,
This was the third time!—
To a king of the people;
Offspring I brought forth,
Props of a fair house,
Props of a fair house,
Jonakr's fair sons.

"But around Swanhild
Bond-maidens sat,
Her, that of all mine
Most to my heart was;
Such was my Swanhild,
In my hall's midmost,
As is the sunbeam
Fair to behold.

The Whetting of Gudrun

"In gold I arrayed her,
And goodly raiment,
Or ever I gave her
To the folk of the Goths.
That was the hardest
Of my heavy woes,
When the bright hair—
O the bright hair of Swanhild!—
In the mire was trodden
By the treading of horses.

"This was the sorest,
When my love, my Sigurd,
Reft of glory
In his bed gat ending:
But this the grimmest
When glittering worms
Tore their way
Through the heart of Gunnar.

"But this the keenest
When they cut to the quick
Of the hardy heart
Of the unfeared Hogni.
Of much of bale I mind me,
Of many griefs I mind me;
Why should I sit abiding
Yet more bale and more?

"Thy coal-black horse,
O Sigurd, bridle,
The swift on the highway!
O let him speed hither!
Here sitteth no longer
Son or daughter,
More good gifts
To give to Gudrun!

"Mindst thou not, Sigurd,
Of the speech betwixt us,
When on one bed
We both sat together,
O my great king—
That thou wouldst come to me
E'en from the hall of Hell,
I to thee from the fair earth?

"Pile high, O earls,
The oaken pile,
Let it be the highest
That ever queen had!
Let the fire burn swift,
My breast with woe laden,
And thaw all my heart,
Hard, heavy with sorrow!"

Now may all earls
Be bettered in mind,
May the grief of all maidens
Ever be minished,
For this tale of sorrow
So told to its ending.

THE LAY OF HAMDIR

GREAT deeds of bale
In the garth began,
At the sad dawning
The tide of Elves' sorrow
When day is a-waxing
And man's grief awaketh,
And the sorrow of each one
The early day quickeneth.

Not now, not now,
Nor yesterday,
But long ago
Has that day worn by,
That ancientest time,
The first time to tell of,
Then, whenas Gudrun,
Born of Giuki,
Whetted her sons
To Swanhild's avenging.

"Your sister's name
Was naught but Swanhild,
Whom Jormunrek
With horses has trodden!—
White horses and black
On the war-beaten way,
Grey horses that go
On the roads of the Goths.

"All alone am I now
As in holt is the aspen;
As the fir-tree of boughs,
So of kin am I bare;
As bare of things longed for
As the willow of leaves

When the bough-breaking wind
The warm day endeth.

"Few, sad, are ye left,
O kings of my folk!
Ye alone living
Last threads of my kin!

"Ah, naught are ye grown
As that Gunnar of old days;
Naught are your hearts
As the heart of Hogni!
Well would ye seek
Vengeance to win
If your hearts were in aught
As the hearts of my brethren!"

Then spake Hamdir
The high-hearted:
"Nought hadst thou to praise
The doings of Hogni,
When they woke up Sigurd
From out of slumber,
And in bed thou satt'st up
'Mid the banes-men's laughter.

"Then when thy bed-gear,
Blue-white, well woven
By art of craftsmen,
All swam with thy king's blood;
Then Sigurd died,
O'er his dead corpse thou sattest,
Not heeding aught gladsome,
Since Gunnar so willed it.

"Great grief for Atli
Gatst thou by Erp's murder,

And the end of thine Eitil
But worse grief for thyself.
Good to use sword
For the slaying of others
In such wise that its edge
Shall not turn on ourselves!"

Then well spake Sorli
From a heart full of wisdom:
"No words will I
Make with my mother,
Though both ye twain
Need words belike—
What askest thou, Gudrun,
To let thee go greeting?

"Weep for thy brethren,
Weep for thy sweet sons,
And thy nighest kinsfolk
Laid by the fight-side!
Yea, and thou, Gudrun,
Mayst greet for us twain
Sitting fey on our steeds
Doomed in far lands to die."

From the garth forth they went
With hearts full of fury,
Sorli and Hamdir,
The sons of Gudrun,
And they met on the way
The wise of all wiles:
"And thou, little Erp,
What helping from thee?"

He of alien womb
Spake out in such wise:
"Good help for my kin,

Such as foot gives to foot,
Or flesh-covered hand
Gives unto hand!"

"What helping for foot
The help that foot giveth,
Or for flesh-covered hand
The helping of hand?"

Then spake Erp
Yet once again
Mock spake the prince
As he sat on his steed:
"Fool's deed to show
The way to a dastard!"
"Bold beyond measure,"
Quoth they, "is the base-born!"

Out from the sheath
Drew they the sheath-steel,
And the glaives' edges played
For the pleasure of hell;
By the third part they minished
The might that they had,
Their young kin they let lie
A-cold on the earth.

Then their fur-cloaks they shook
And bound fast their swords,
In webs goodly woven
Those great ones were clad;
Young they went o'er the fells
Where the dew was new-fallen,
Swift, on steeds of the Huns,
Heavy vengeance to wreak.

Forth stretched the ways,
And an ill way they found,

Yea, their sister's son[1]
Hanging slain upon tree—
Wolf-trees by the wind made cold
At the town's westward
Loud with cranes' clatter—
Ill abiding there long!

Din in the king's hall
Of men merry with drink,
And none might hearken
The horses' tramping
Or ever the warders
Their great horn winded.

Then men went forth
To Jormunrek
To tell of the heeding
Of men under helm:
"Give ye good counsel!
Great ones are come hither,
For the wrong of men mighty
Was the may to death trodden."

Loud Jormunrek laughed,
And laid hand to his beard,
Nor bade bring his byrny,
But with the wine fighting,
Shook his red locks,
On his white shield sat staring,
And in his hand
Swung the gold cup on high.

"Sweet sight for me
Those twain to set eyes on,
Sorli and Hamdir,
Here in my hall!
Then with bowstrings

[1] Randver, the son of their sister's husband.

Would I bind them,
And hang the good Giukings
Aloft on the gallows!"

. . . . .
. . . . .
. . . . .

Then spake Hrothglod
From off the high steps,
Spake the slim-fingered
Unto her son,—
—For a threat was cast forth
Of what ne'er should fall—
"Shall two men alone
Two hundred Gothfolk
Bind or bear down
In the midst of their burg?"

. . . . .
. . . . .

Strife and din in the hall,
Cups smitten asunder
Men lay low in blood
From the breasts of Goths flowing.
Then spake Hamdir,
The high-hearted:
"Thou cravedst, O king,
For the coming of us,
The sons of one mother,
Amidmost thine hall—
Look on these hands of thine,
Look on these feet of thine,
Cast by us, Jormunrek,
On to the flame!"

Then cried aloud
The high Gods' kinsman,[1]

[1] Odin, namely.

Bold under byrny—
Roared he as bears roar;
"Stones to the stout ones
That the spears bite not,
Nor the edges of steel,
These sons of Jonakr!"

. . . . .
. . . . .

QUOTH SORLI
"Bale, brother, wroughtst thou
By that bag's[1] opening,
Oft from that bag
Rede of bale cometh!
Heart hast thou, Hamdir,
If thou hadst heart's wisdom
Great lack in a man
Who lacks wisdom and lore!"

HAMDIR SAID
"Yea, off were the head
If Erp were alive yet,
Our brother the bold
Whom we slew by the way;
The far-famed through the world.—
Ah, the fates drave me on,
And the man war made holy,
There must I slay!"

SORLI SAID
"Unmeet we should do
As the doings of wolves are,
Raising wrong each 'gainst other
As the dogs of the Norns,
The greedy ones nourished
In waste steads of the world.

[1] "Bag," his mouth.

In strong wise have we fought, The Lay of
On Goths' corpses we stand, Hamdir
Beat down by our edges,
E'en as ernes on the bough.
Great fame our might winneth,
Die we now, or to-morrow,—
No man lives till eve
Whom the fates doom at morning."

At the hall's gable-end
Fell Sorli to earth,
But Hamdir lay low
At the back of the houses.

Now this is called the Ancient Lay of Hamdir.

THE LAMENT OF ODDRUN

THERE was a king hight Heidrek, and his daughter was called Borgny, and the name of her lover was Vilmund. Now she might nowise be made lighter of a child she travailed with, before Oddrun, Atli's sister, came to her,—she who had been the love of Gunnar, Giuki's son. But of their speech together has this been sung:

I have heard tell
In ancient tales
How a may there came
To Morna-land,
Because no man
On mould abiding
For Heidrek's daughter
Might win healing.

All that heard Oddrun,
Atli's sister,
How that the damsel
Had heavy sickness,
So she led from stall
Her bridled steed,
And on the swart one
Laid the saddle.

She made her horse wend
O'er smooth ways of earth,
Until to a high-built
Hall she came;
Then the saddle she had
From the hungry horse,
And her ways wended
In along the wide hall,
And this word first
Spake forth therewith:

"What is most famed,
Afield in Hunland,
Or what may be
Blithest in Hunland?"

QUOTH THE HANDMAID
"Here lieth Borgny,
Borne down by trouble,
Thy sweet friend, O Oddrun,
See to her helping!"

ODDRUN SAID
"Who of the Lords
Hath laid this grief on her,
Why is the anguish
Of Borgny so weary?"

THE HANDMAID SAID
"He is hight Vilmund,
Friend of hawk-bearers,
He wrapped the damsel
In the warm bed-gear
Five winters long
Without her father's wotting."

No more than this
They spake methinks;
Kind sat she down
By the damsel's knee;
Mightily sang Oddrun,
Eagerly sang Oddrun,
Sharp piercing songs
By Borgny's side:

"Till a maid and a boy
Might tread on the world's ways,
Blithe babes and sweet

Of Hogni's bane."
Then the damsel forewearied
The word took up,
The first word of all
That had won from her:

"So may help thee
All helpful things,
Frey and Freyia,
And all the fair Gods,
As thou hast thrust
This torment from me!"

ODDRUN SAID
"Yet no heart had I
For thy helping,
Since never wert thou
Worthy of helping,
But my word I held to,
That of old was spoken
When the high lords
Dealt out the heritage,
That every soul
I would ever help."

BORGNY SAID
"Right mad art thou, Oddrun,
And reft of thy wits,
Whereas thou speakest
Hard words to me
Thy fellow ever
Upon the earth,
As of brothers twain
We had been born."

ODDRUN SAID
"Well I mind me yet,

What thou saidst that evening,
Whenas I bore forth
Fair drink for Gunnar;
Such a thing, saidst thou,
Should fall out never,
For any may
Save for me alone."

Mind had the damsel
Of the weary day
Whenas the high lords
Dealt out the heritage,
And she sat her down,
The sorrowful woman,
To tell of the bale,
And the heavy trouble.

"Nourished was I
In the hall of kings—
Most folk were glad—
'Mid the council of great ones:
In fair life lived I,
And the wealth of my father
For five winters only,
While yet he had life.

"Such were the last words
That ever he spake,
The king forewearied,
Ere his ways he went;
For he bade folk give me
The gold red-gleaming,
And give me in Southlands
To the son of Grimhild.

"But Brynhild he bade
To the helm to betake her,

And said that Death-chooser
She should become;
And that no better
Might ever be born
Into the world,
If fate would not spoil it.

"Brynhild in bower
Sewed at her broidery,
Folk she had
And fair lands about her;
Earth lay a-sleeping,
Slept the heavens aloft
When Fafnir's-bane
The burg first saw.

"Then was war waged
With the Welsh-wrought sword
And the burg all broken
That Brynhild owned;
Nor wore long space,
E'en as well might be,
Ere all those wiles
Full well she knew.

"Hard and dreadful
Was the vengeance she drew down,
So that all we
Have woe enow.
Through all lands of the world
Shall that story fare forth
How she did her to death
For the death of Sigurd.

"But therewithal Gunnar
The gold-scatterer
Did I fall to loving

As she should have loved him.
Rings of red gold
Would they give to Atli,
Would give to my brother
Things goodly and great.

"Yea, fifteen steads
Would they give for me,
And the load of Grani
To have as a gift;
But then spake Atli,
That such was his will,
Never gift to take
From the sons of Giuki.

"But we in nowise
Might love withstand,
And mine head must I lay
On my love, the ring-breaker;
And many there were
Among my kin,
Who said that they
Had seen us together.

"Then Atli said
That I surely never
Would fall to crime
Or shameful folly:
But now let no one
For any other
That shame deny,
Where love has dealing.

"For Atli sent
His serving-folk
Wide through the murkwood
Proof to win of me,

And thither they came
Where they ne'er should have come,
Where one bed we twain
Had dight betwixt us.

"To those men had we given
Rings of red gold,
Nought to tell
Thereof to Atli,
But straight they hastened
Home to the house,
And all the tale
To Atli told.

"Whereas from Gudrun
Well they hid it,
Though better by half
Had she have known it.
. . . .
. . . .

"Din was there to hear
Of the hoofs gold-shod,
When into the garth
Rode the sons of Giuki.

"There from Hogni
The heart they cut,
But into the worm-close
Cast the other.
There the king, the wise-hearted,
Swept his harp-strings,
For the mighty king
Had ever mind
That I to his helping
Soon should come.

"But now was I gone
Yet once again
Unto Geirmund,
Good feast to make;
Yet had I hearing,
E'en out from Hlesey,
How of sore trouble
The harp-strings sang.

"So I bade the bondmaids
Be ready swiftly,
For I listed to save
The life of the king,
And we let our ship
Swim over the sound,
Till Atli's dwelling
We saw all clearly.

"Then came the wretch[1]
Crawling out,
E'en Atli's mother,
All sorrow upon her!
A grave gat her sting
In the heart of Gunnar,
So that no helping
Was left for my hero.

"O gold-clad woman,
Full oft I wonder
How I my life
Still hold thereafter,
For methought I loved
That light in battle,

[1] Atli's mother took the form of the only adder that was not lulled to sleep by Gunnar's harp-playing, and who slew him.

The swift with the sword,
As my very self.

"Thou hast sat and hearkened
As I have told thee
Of many an ill-fate,
Mine and theirs—
Each man liveth
E'en as he may live—
Now hath gone forth
The greeting of Oddrun."

p. 291, l. 31. 'wolf in holy places,' a man put out of the pale of society for his crimes, an outlaw.

294, last l. 'One-eyed': the man is Odin, who is always so represented, because he gave his eye as a pledge for a draught from the fountain of Mimir, the source of all wisdom.

306, l. 23. 'Norns came to him.' Nornir are the fates of the northern mythology. They are three—*Urðr*, the past; *Verðandi*, the present; and *Skuld*, the future. They sit beside the fountain of *Urð* (*Urðarbrunur*), which is below one of the roots of *Yggdrasil*, the world-tree, which tree their office it is to nourish by sprinkling it with the waters of the fountain.

309, l. 13. Valkyrja, 'Chooser of the elected.' The women were so called whom Odin sent to choose those for death in battle who were to join the *Einherjar* in the hall of the elected, '*Val-höll*.'

312, l. 20. The man in the boat is Odin, doubtless, as in the next chapter.

314, l. 16. 'There came a man into the fight,' etc: Odin coming to change the ownership of the sword he had given to Sigmund. See above, p. 295.

320, l. 33. Ran is the goddess of the sea, wife of Ægir.

323, l. 26. Grifir, called Grípir in the Edda.

325, l. 10 'Then, quoth Sigurd,' etc: This and verses following are inserted from the *Reginsmál* by the present translators.

326, l. 16. Dísir, *sing.* Dís. These are the guardian beings who follow a man from his birth to his death. The word originally means sister, and is used throughout the Eddaic poems as a dignified synonym for woman, lady.

329, l. 9. 'Unknown to men is my kin.' Sigurd refusing

to tell his name is to be referred to the superstition that a dying man could throw a curse on his enemy.

330, l. 13. Surt; a fire-giant, who will destroy the world at the Ragnarok, or destruction of all things. The Æsir are the gods of the Scandinavian mythology.

333, etc. 'The Songs of the Birds' is inserted from *Reginsmál* by the translators.

335, etc. The stanzas here are inserted from *Sigrdrifa-mál* by the translators.

336, l. 8. The Asyniur are the goddesses of Scandinavian mythology.

341, etc. This chapter is nearly literally the same as chapter 166 of the Wilkina-saga; ed. Perinskiold, Stockholm, 1715.

366, etc. Chap. XXXI is the Eddaic poem, called the First Lay of Gudrun, and inserted here by the translators.

375, l. 6. 'Dyed red by folk of the Gauls.' The original has *rauðu manna bloði*, red dyed in the blood of men; the Sagaman's original error in dealing with the word *Valaript* in the corresponding passage of the Short Lay of Sigurd.

394, l. 9. In the prose Edda the slaying of Swanhild is a spontaneous and sudden act on the part of the king. As he came back from hunting one day, there sat Swanhild washing her linen; and it came into the king's mind how that she was the cause of all his woe, so he and his men rode over her and slew her.

396, l. 21. 'A certain man,' etc.: Odin; he ends the tale as he began it.

396, l. 29. 'And now,' etc., inserted by translators from the prose Edda; the stanza at the end is inserted from the Whetting of Gudrun.

ADDITIONAL NOTES BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON

p. 306, l. 26. 'home from the wars': sentence omitted, 'he walked with a leek in his hand to meet his son and . . .'

307, l. 17. 'he met': sentence omitted, 'against (or beside) a certain wood.'

314, l. 19. 'have': this form of the præterite of heave is well-recognized (see Oxford Dict.) and is deliberately used here.

316, l. 15. 'forecastle': in the original, *fyrirrúm*, lit. foreroom; it was the section of a ship immediately in front of the poop, and beside the poop was the seat of the steersman; the word forecastle is not used here in its ordinary sense. In Index III to Heimskringla (Saga Lib. Vol. 6, p. 439) the same word is translated 'forehold.'

292, l. 33. 'I am yet wont': in the original, 'we (i.e. the household thralls) were wont.'

317, l. 10. 'borne me a child': in the original, 'borne thy child.' Alf wanted to defer the wedding until Hiordis was delivered of the posthumous child she was already big with (Sigurd).

321, l. 20. 'rode with': read, 'handed over to,' from *reiða* to weigh out, to deliver, not from *ríða* to ride.

336, l. 32. 'and gave him the drink of love': not in original.

338, l. 12. 'Good-folks': in the original, *dísir*, a word that stands for (1) goddesses, (2) Norns, and that is the case here, but with especial reference to the Valkyrjur defining at birth the fate of the baby.

339, l. 5. 'loosing': *lausnar* of the original refers to the midwife's helping hand at child-birth.

342, l. 13. 'dew-shoe': the technical English term is chape.

344, l. 12. 'and my deeds that are to come': in the original, 'and that have come to men's knowledge' (*frankomin*, i.e. come forth so as to be known).

p. 347, l. 36. 'tellest thou that': sentence omitted, 'Dost thou say he was born when his father fell?'

348, l. 5. 'went to': in the original, 'she fared with,' i.e. wedded King Alf.

348, l. 25. 'thee': in the original, 'you two,' i.e. Grimhild and Gudrun.

351, l. 11. 'greater-hearted': in the original, *grimmari*, literally 'fiercer-hearted.'

351, l. 17. *þat er göfgast ráð:* lit. 'that is the noblest match.'

352, l. 25. 'of the rulers of folk': in the original, 'of the ruler's folk.'

353, l. 20. 'king of the Greeks': in the original, 'king of Garthrealm' (the ancient Scandinavian name of Russia).

353, l. 29. 'laid it betwixt': in the original, 'laid it bare betwixt.'

353, l. 32. 'she': in the original, 'he'; and this misunderstanding of the text makes it necessary to cut out the words, 'gave it to him, but he,' which are not found in the original.

354, l. 7. 'and my well-beloved': not in the original.

354, l. 17. 'and at that feast was Gunnar wedded to Brynhild': not in the original.

355, l. 14. 'I know not': the original adds, 'clearly.'

356, l. 11, &c. 'thou': in the original, 'ye' throughout the sentence.

356, l. 33. 'Sigurd' is an error; in the original, it is Gunnar who 'durst the deed,' i.e. rode through the fire.

357, l. 23. original, *en ek ann þínum bróður:* lit. 'but I love thy brother in name only,' i.e. 'between me and your brother no love is lost.'

360, l. 8. 'me': in the original, 'us two.'

360, l. 31. 'or divide the good from the evil': not in the original.

360, l. 33. 'are there': in the original, 'are we.'

363, l. 25. 'his brother': Hogni (omitted).

p. 364, l. 15. The original has, '[they] offer him gold and great dominion to do this deed.'

373, l. 18. 'must bewail with weeping': in the original, 'Brynhild prayed with laughter for that which she bewailed with weeping.'

375, l. 24. In the original, 'Brynhild went forth to it.'

384, l. 13. In the original, 'they made their ships not fast.'

389, l. 8, &c. 'and of all,' &c.: in the original, 'and that inheritance will longest live on not to lose the cruelty,' i.e. 'the thought of revenge in my heart.'

389, l. 20. 'this is my counsel': in the original, 'I will now accept these terms, and let us make,' &c.

391, l. 33. in the original, 'thereupon she had the hall set on fire.'

395, l. 24. 'play not': in the original, '*eigi skæðja*,' lit. 'not use for weapons' (from *skǫð*, weapon).

396, l. 17. 'whereas': in the original, 'in that they had used stones for weapons.'

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